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THE ASSYRIANS AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

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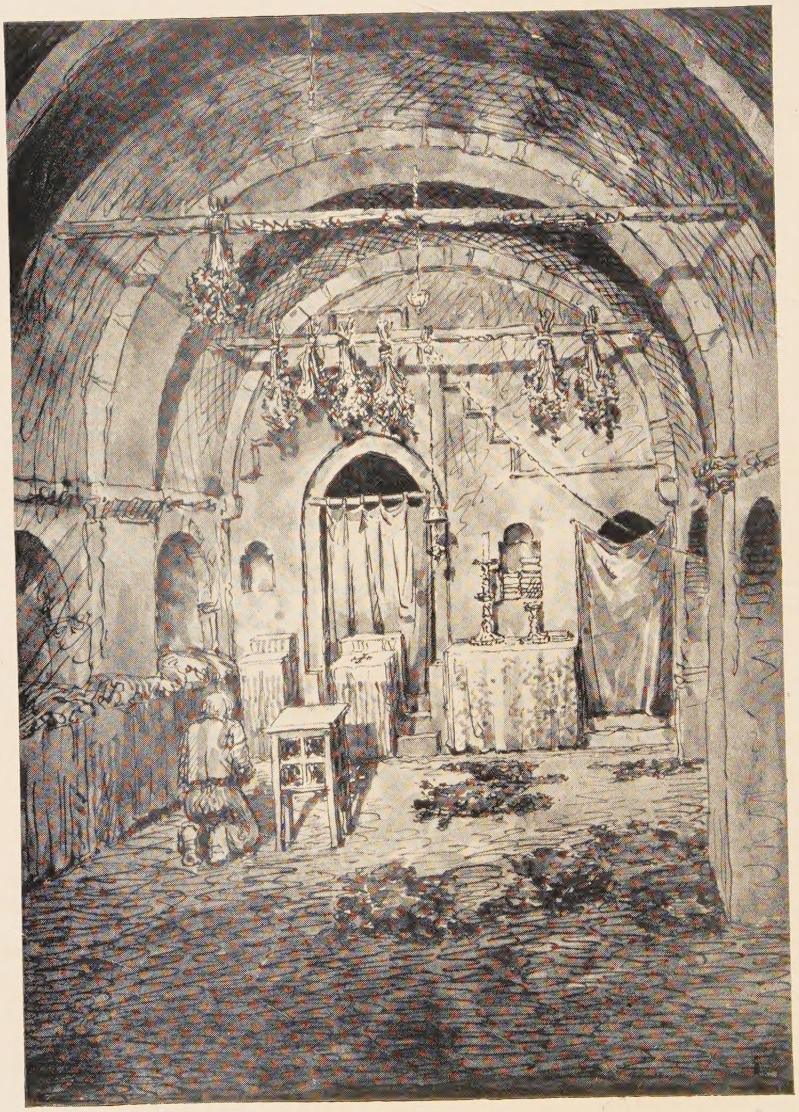

INTERIOR OF AN ASSYRIAN CHURCH
MAR SHALITHA, QUDSHANIS

THE ASSYRIANS
AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

BY

THE REV. W. A. WIGRAM
B.D. (Camb.), D.D. Lambeth

Author of

"THE HISTORY OF THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH"
"THE CRADLE OF MANKIND"

WITH FOURTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

G. BELL & SONS
LONDON
1929

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THE ASSYRIANS AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS

CHAPTER I

NATIONAL STOCKS IN MESOPOTAMIA

MESOPOTAMIA is emphatically "the Land of the two Rivers" ("Bait Nahrein"), Tigris and Euphrates, as Egypt is, with equal decision, the land of the Nile. In strictness, the name is applied —as we believe that the name Egypt was once applied—to the "Delta" district only, the provinces which the river has won from the sea. In Mesopotamia the alluvial plain, being the work of two rivers, not one, is not of the triangular shape that the name implies, but includes all the district, from Baghdad down to the Persian Gulf. In practice, the upper part of the river valley, both in Egypt and in Mesopotamia, came to be dependent politically on the power that controlled the lower, and has always continued to be so. Thus, the name was extended accordingly, and Mesopotamia means now not only the "delta district" of the Tigris and Euphrates, which is Iraq proper, but also all the province called by the Arabs "the Island" (Jezireh), or the lands between those rivers, from the point where they issue from the mountains of Taurus to the sea. In both lands the site of the capital was dictated by the facts of the course of the

rivers. The government had to be somewhere about the head of the delta, where it could control the irrigation, for he who ruled that ruled the land.

The actual city might vary, and a king might choose Babylon, Seleucia or Baghdad, but all of these are within a circle of forty miles radius, and are about the strategic point. Cities in other districts, even if they might be seats of empire for a while, were no more than provincial capitals.

We all know of Mesopotamia as one of the original hearths—quite possibly the oldest of all—from which the fire of civilization was distributed about the world; as such, it has its never-failing interest for the archæologist. What gives the country its interest to students of another kind, and a part of its charm for those whose fate brings them to live there, is this: that in that land, nothing which has once struck root seems ever to perish altogether. It is not only that the soil has preserved the relics of those whose civilization was already old six thousand years ago, but that the land still keeps the old types and customs, so that archæology is there a living thing, not merely the study of the dead. Boats of the model laid in the tomb of the King of Ur, to carry his soul to the land of spirits in 4000 B.C., still ply upon the Tigris to-day, and are the ordinary vehicle of the marsh Arab. Moslem women still bathe ceremonially in the Holy Wells near Baghdad, down which their ancestresses descended in the track of the Lady Ishtar to bring up the water of life from the Underworld, that so

they may be able to give life to others. The people of the land are still the people of Babylonia and Assyria of old, and up to the dawn of the twentieth century the village life was still that of four thousand years ago. The modern house of Baghdad to-day is still of the type built in Ur before Babylon was.

It is true, of course, that invasions from without have come in again and again through the centuries, and each has brought some foreign culture that may or may not have survived, or a new type that may be there still. The tale of invaders is a long one, for Alexander is not the first on the list, though the Greek may have been the first to bring Western influence into the land. The Turk—as much a foreigner as any—is but one in a series, and his rule but an episode in the history. He, an Eastern, came to the land from the West; and now the latest in the roll, the English from the Western ocean, have entered the land from the East and South, to rule for an hour where Alexander and Nebuchadnezzar ruled before.

It is a strange fate that has put the hearths of the world's two oldest civilizations—the land of Babel and the land of the Pharaohs—both under the guidance of men from a little island in the Atlantic.

Each of the old stocks of the dwellers in the land —from the union of which we hope to see the modern nation of Iraq form itself—has its own history and its own interest. We propose to take one of them only, the Assyrian or Assyrio-Chal-

dæan [1] type, and to give the story of some of the later stages of its development, a story that has a romance that is peculiarly its own. But in telling the tale of any one of the many "millets," or national and religious stocks, which dwell often in unfriendly neighbourhood in the land, it is impossible to avoid dealing also with the political and racial problems of the surrounding peoples, and showing how the same difficulties affected all.

The Assyrian stock has probably been there from the very earliest times. Civilization begins in Mesopotamia with a "Hamitic," or possibly Mongolian race, viz. the "Sumerian," at about 4000 B.C. The beginning of this Sumerian kingdom of "Nimrod, son of Cush, son of Ham," was Babylon and Ur (Babel and Erech), in the land of Shinar. So the Hebrew traditionalists gathered from older, and quite reliable, sources of information (Gen. x. 10), and archæology confirms their verdict.

A little later, a Semitic stock, the Accadian, appears in the land, and we read that "Assur"—the Assyrian emigrants generally—went out and founded new cities at Calah and Nineveh, of which the ruins abide unto this day. Their emigration may have been caused by the coming of Accad, but they were, like those invaders, of Semitic blood.

[1] The "Chaldæan" Empire is that of ancient Babylon, the home whence "Assur" migrated, but the name was given to part of the nation in the sixteenth century by Roman ecclesiastics when they needed a distinctive name for the people, other than "Nestorian," and did not wish to use "Assyrian" or "Syrian."

It would seem that the Semitic clans migrated northward about the time of the fall of Ur, and the rise of that upstart and parvenu city, Babylon, to the control of Shinar. This took place about 2000 B.C., and the one event may well have been the cause of the other.

Most of the migrating clans were content to settle in what is now Northern Iraq, but some small septs went further. The leader of one of these was known, in the land where he finally pitched his tent, as "Abram the Outlander" (Gen. xiv. 13), and he has left a very deep mark on the religious history of the race.

This was, at least, the standard account as given a few years ago: later discoveries, however, lead to the conclusion that there was a Semitic migration northward at an earlier date, and that the emigrants of 2000 B.C. only followed where their kinsfolk had gone before them.

The Assyrians rose to greatness in their new land as the founders of the first military empire in history. That would seem to have been their one original contribution to the progress of the world, for their architecture, religion, and science were all frankly borrowed from Babylon. Still, those who gave men the battering-ram and the catapult (the world's artillery till cannon became effective two thousand years later) have at least not been entirely ineffective among the nations.

The fact that they ruled their empire by a system of "captivities," or by the transplanting of the conquered stocks, brought many new types into

Mesopotamia. The best known of these captivities is one of the smallest, the Israelite, and it is curious to reflect that traces of this body appear still to exist in the land to this day.

The statement may bring down the wrath of those who hold to the "British-Israel theory," but nevertheless it is the fact. On the River Khabor in Northern Iraq—one of the sites of the original settlement—there still exist Israelite or Jewish villages, and old members of the Jewish colony in Mosul have assured the writer that they regard themselves as "belonging to the ten tribes, not to the two," and as still living "where Sargon, King of Assyria, put our Fathers" (2 Kings xvii. 6).

The Assyrian Empire fell in due time, and others took its place; the kindred stock of the Chaldæans or Babylonians from the South, and after them the Medo-Persians from the North and East. The Assyrian stock, however, was by no means exterminated,—at least there is no evidence of such destruction,—and seemingly continued to exist in its old home. Of course, there were other types in the districts round it, and of these the most marked is the nation of the Kurds or Karduchi.

This "millet" (the Turkish official term for a nationality in their empire is too convenient for a writer to avoid using it) is at once an interest to the traveller and student, and a standing difficulty to the government of the land, whatever that government may chance to be. The Kurds are of Aryan, not of Semitic, stock; the language they use, though its dialects vary, is always closely allied

to and derived from Persian; they would seem to have inhabited the mountain districts of "Kurdistan" or Kordyene since before history began. At the least they were there in days of Tiglath-Pileser I, the founder of the Assyrian Empire in the year 1000 B.C., and they were there still in the year 400 B.C., when Xenophon with his Greeks fought his way homeward through their mountains. Nor do their characteristics appear to have altered in the interval between 1000 B.C. and A.D. 1900.

They are a strong and gifted, and in many ways an attractive type, with whom many English officials have found it easy enough to be friends. Yet, whether it be from the character of their mountain home, or from something lacking in their own make-up, they are a *type manqué*. Their home is the great semicircle of rugged mountain ranges which extend from the Mediterranean at Alexandretta, round to the north of Mosul and south to the Persian Gulf; a land of narrow mountain valleys, debarred from any access to the sea. Hence, they have never been able to emerge from the "tribal stage" of development, and are in it to this day. They have never been a united race, and none of their blood has ever been able to weld all together, or to produce anything larger than an evanescent confederation of clans. They have had their great men: Saladin is a national hero worthy of any nation; but those great men have made their careers elsewhere, and the nation still remains a set of clansmen only, owning allegiance, for practical purposes, to nothing higher than the chief of a

tribe. There may or may not be a "hukumet" or supreme government in the background which the chief knows that he had better not provoke, but ideas of citizenship or patriotism are quite beyond their mental horizon. Not over-religious, normally, they may be swept at times by waves of fanaticism.

So long as there was any ruler that claimed to be Khalif of Islam, then it might be admitted that —as Kurds are nearly all Sunni Mahommedans by faith—the "successor of the Prophet" had some sort of claim to the allegiance of the tribesman,— so long, of course, as he did not attempt to enforce it. For as long as the nominal ruler of Kurdistan was the Sultan of Turkey, this idyllic state of affairs was practically allowed to continue, and Turkish "Kaimakams" knew better than to attempt to carry out any orders they might feel obliged to issue. Now, there is no Khalif, and both in Turkey and Iraq, governments want to be obeyed, and, so far, the Kurd has not been able to assimilate himself to a new régime. Still, neither the modern Ottoman nor the government of Iraq feel able to acquiesce in the existence of a lawless Alsatia. This has caused trouble, and will continue to do so.

Another national type, the Armenian, has its real home on the tableland to the north of the semi-circular zone of mountain that we have spoken of; circumstances, however, have so scattered this unhappy people that their remnants are found in Mesopotamia as elsewhere, and they form one of the stocks that we have to consider.

In their original home, local conditions allowed

a nation to develop, which seemed to be designed as a buffer State between the lands that have always been the seats of great empires, Anatolia and Mesopotamia. A distinctly strong stock, which for centuries was accustomed to provide the picked troops of the Byzantine army,—that army which was for centuries *the* scientific force of its days,—the Armenian was also gifted with great trading faculties, which even their bitterest enemies would allow that they keep still. But they had also no mean artistic gifts in the direction of painting and architecture, and have always been devoted to the particular form of religion that they professed, which they were apt to make into a standard of their nationality.

Yet, through the centuries, this strong and gifted nation has somehow failed to make good. It has never been anything better than "a strife unto its neighbours" when it was partly independent,—for actually so it seldom was,—and a problem to its rulers when avowedly subject to somebody. Unable either to command or to obey, the Armenian was for ever intriguing against the suzerain of the moment with the emissaries of his rival.

They were able to attempt great things. In late classic days, when Rome was spreading her dominion over Asia Minor, this stock produced such rulers as Tigranes and Mithridates, who could rally the East against the encroaching West, and for a moment seemed likely to drive back the Roman, at least to the western side of the Ægæan. Yet the effort failed, and in later days the status

of Armenia as an independent ally of Rome, between her frontier and that of Persia, failed also. Once again the obstinate Armenian stock made the effort, and established a kingdom under the House of Bagrad, which had its capital at Ani in Transcaucasia, where the majestic ruins bear witness to Armenian greatness to this day.

For a critical two centuries (860–1060, the days of the first Mongol attacks), the tough mountaineers held back the advancing Seljuk Turks, and it was the obvious interest of the Byzantine Empire to protect and foster so valuable a buffer. That, however, they would not do. The Armenians were Heretics, which meant that their national Church obstinately refused to be subject to the Greek, and they were therefore unworthy of any support from the Orthodox. So Armenia was allowed to go down before the Mahommedan, and Constantinople soon paid the penalty for her folly, when the disaster of Malazkurd (a battle fought in the very year of the Norman conquest of England), gave Anatolia to the Turk for ever. "Lesser Armenia" kept her independence in Cilicia for awhile after, but soon this kingdom fell also.

The Armenian has now been scattered, and forms one of the many elements in the population of Mesopotamia, where are found other strange "nations," or millets, each with a faith that is its own. There are Yezidis, whose "Devil-worship" is probably a survival of a primitive paganism. Sabæans, who seem to perpetuate the "Gnosticism" of the first Christian century, "Shebbek" and

"Sarli," who have found it possible to shelter pre-Mahommedan faiths under the wing of a heretical form of Islam. The land with six thousand years of continuous history is a museum of ethnology and of religious science.

Over a country that was the richest in the world once, "one garden, from Samarra to the gulf," and that might be so again if modern engineers were allowed to do their work, waves of conquest have constantly ebbed and flowed. Thrice the Persian from the East has come down from his tableland, to hold the river-plain for awhile and to lose it as power went from him. Once in the days of Darius and Xerxes—600–300 B.C.—ere the might of Alexander brought the kingdom of the "Great King" to the ground. Once for four centuries of the Christian era (A.D. 225–640), when the House of Sassan sought to revive the glory of their Achæmenid predecessors, and could fight with Rome on at least equal terms. Once in the seventeenth century, when he had to yield the prize to the Ottoman Turk under Selim the Grim.

Greek and Roman from the West have made their way in again and again, only to resign what was too far from their capital for them to hold.

Alexander, the great practical dreamer, sought to unite East and West, and make Babylon once more the capital of the world. His successors brought Hellenic culture into the land, but could not subdue it. Trajan, Julian, Heraclius, each in turn followed the lure, and succumbed to it.

A later age saw the Mongols from Central Asia

swarm down into it, and inflict on Baghdad a sack that shocked the not over-tender mediæval conscience. When they retired, the Ottomans, men of their blood, were their lawful heirs. All of these, however, were but passing storms. They ruled for a few centuries maybe, but that is little in a land that can count sixty of them. Greek, Persian and Mongol came and went.

There was one type, however, that was for ever coming into Mesopotamia, and making the land his own, and that was the Arab of the desert. Since time began, there has been an infiltration, sometimes an influx, from the desert to the sown, of those whom the desert, hard mother of men, refuses to support. The force behind this is the progressive desiccation of Arabia.

There is no doubt that, at one time, districts of Arabia which are now desolate could support a very considerable population. That most modern and useful tool of the archæologist, the aeroplane, has revealed the existence of great "corrals" for game, folds for flocks, and settlements of neolithic date, in lands that are now mere wastes of sand. The cause of the change is still unknown, but men suggest that a slight change in the curve of the path of the monsoon, which now bears its load of rain direct from the Indian Ocean to the Indian Ghats, would imply that the wind in question would drop enough moisture upon Arabia to make a great difference in its character.

With this gradual desiccation has come a regular process of immigration, a drift of the desert Arab

into the watered lands of Mesopotamia. This began in prehistoric days, and is still going on. Arab tribes leave the desert not too willingly, for the act implies a certain loss of caste in the opinion of their hardier fellows, and they settle where they can in cultivable lands. This has the result that an Arab tribe may be partly nomad and partly settled, even if the nomad does look upon his kin as one may fancy the wild goose looks upon his cousins in the farmyard; and the settled portions, while all the men still count themselves as still belonging to the same tribe, may be scattered at great distances from each other, in Iraq territory. Whether the change is for the better for the nomad is a doubtful matter.

Occasionally, instead of the gradual infiltration, there may come a great and marked wave of invasion. One such in primitive days was the inrush of the Accadian type upon the older Sumerian civilization; one in historic times was the great outburst of energy in Arabia that was connected with the rise of Islam, resulting in a definite Arab invasion and occupation of Mesopotamia. It is by no means impossible that the recent activity of the Wahabi fanatics is prompted by the same force, and the fact that the desert is now under a different government from that ruling the cultivated land has complicated the question in a new way.

Thus, the Arab has possessed himself of Iraq, and has established his civilization and language in a country originally inhabited by a type that was different from, but yet akin to him. The land has

now become his, in tongue and in national type. Only students look back beyond the Abbassid Khalifs of Baghdad.

The question of settlement and common development has been complicated by the religious problem, for the latest of the great immigrations of the Arab stock brought with them, in the seventh century A.D., the militant religion of Islam.

Mesopotamia then, with its long history, is our background, and on it we have to trace the romantic fortunes of one of the many national and religious types of the land, in its relations with the other nationalities and faiths that have appeared in the country.

CHAPTER II

THE PARTHIAN PERIOD

THE coming of Alexander the Great marks an epoch in the long rivalry of East and West, for there begins with him a period—which was rightly dated from him in the works of all chroniclers of the day—in which Western rule and Western culture are spreading over the East, with either Greeks or Greek-influenced Romans as their standard-bearers. For a thousand years (330 B.C. to A.D. 640) this process goes on, and only ends when the rise of Islam brings a totally new factor into the situation. Alexander is the destroyer of old and decadent empires in the East, but he also seeks to restore them by Western strength and life, and had he lived, his genius might have accomplished the union of the two civilizations. That was his dream, and had he been granted the thirty years of additional working life that seemed to be quite possible when he passed away at the age of thirty-two, he might have embodied it in fact in the empire that seemed to be willing to obey him. When he died, he was the actual as well as the nominal sovereign of a dominion that spread from the Adriatic to the Indus, and he had so impressed his personality upon it, that he and he alone of all men of his age is

still unforgotten in those lands. Everywhere in that vast stretch of different types and different religions, men know of "Sikandar," and know him as a hero who is in a class altogether by himself.

What it may be that Alexander had the power and the vision to accomplish, his successors certainly could not do, and those whom he might perhaps have brought together, swung apart and into secular hostility once more.

The "Diadochi" were men of lesser mould, incapable of anything higher than dynastic ambition, and only one of them was capable of realizing even that. Ptolemy, knowing at least what he could not do, was content to be the ruler of Egypt, and he founded a dynasty there which lasted for three centuries, and which did most useful scientific work. The man whose patronage made possible the work of Euclid and the Septuagint, effected something for the progress of the world. His rival and comrade, the founder of the House of Seleucus, had a far larger dominion, one that included Iraq and all Mesopotamia, but it has left nothing lasting behind it, unless it be a feat to have impressed its name on one city of far older origin than itself. Kirkuk in Northern Iraq still carries a faint reminiscence of its old name, "Karka d'Bait Sluk," the Citadel of the House of Seleucus, but the "tel" that bears the name was ancient long before the Seleucids ruled in the land.

It is true that they were handicapped by the conditions of their rule. It was a time of confusion, of movement of nations, such as that which was to

destroy the Roman Empire seven centuries later, and to come again in the course of history after that. This time it was the Gauls who were coming down into Italy, Greece, and Anatolia. They were to find a home in what we now call France at last, —the land was not even Gallia then,—but in the East they were simply a wave of destruction that came and passed. They did leave some traces, for the province of "Galatia" bore their name after them, and they provided a "motive" for a very famous statue, and an address for an even more famous letter " to the Galatians," but for the moment all that they effected politically was to make any enduring work impossible for the House of Seleucus.

When the Seleucids passed, it was the Parthians who took their place, rising into importance about 240 B.C. and remaining holders of the sceptre till A.D. 240,—a long time for a race now so completely forgotten.

They came from the lands by the Caspian, and were Turanian by stock, which is as much as to say that in blood, and in character, they were much like the Turk. Gradually they won the rule over all Persia and Mesopotamia, and were received as allies by the Chinese Empire in the East. The records of this ancient country, now first coming into use by Western scholars, often throw unexpected light on periods that were previously quite obscure. The Chinese knew the Parthians, as men who coined silver money with the head of their King, Al-Sak (Arsaces), upon it. They had mas-

tered the art of writing, and so were not without some tincture of the civilization that is lawfully only the heritage of the Celestial kingdom, though being barbarians after all, they put the inscriptions on leather, not on paper, and had a queer way of writing horizontally, instead of straight up and down. Actually, the leather writing material—parchment—that so astonished the Chinese ambassadors, was a recent invention, for it was only a short time before that the Pergamenes had brought in that "pergamenum" which was then displacing the tablet of wax or clay.

The Parthian rule did not extend far to the West. Anatolia was divided between that Pergamus that had invented parchment, and the kindred kingdoms of Pontus and Armenia.

Armenians, of whom we shall have a good deal to say in the future, were an Aryan stock. Their own legends say that they are the descendants of Haik, son of Japhet, who came straight back to Ararat in virtuous protest against the act of his kin, who would insist on building the tower of Babel. Hence the purity of the Armenian language, which all men spoke, before that unlucky episode.

Other stories which they tell of themselves go back to Nebuchadnezzar and to Semiramis, whose river still irrigates their ancient capital of Van. Modern scientists, more prosaically, say that they appear in the land about 600 B.C. and that they then unite with an older stock of aboriginal inhabitants, the "Urartians," a race that had much in common with the Hittites of the central portion of Asia Minor.

This latter stock was certainly in the land by 900 B.C. and they fought for some three centuries with the Assyrians of Nineveh, from whom they seem to have borrowed the cuneiform script used in the inscriptions still abundant on their rocks.

Pergamus, Armenia, and Pontus were the immediate neighbours of the Parthian to the West, but behind them lay a greater force by far. Rome was now victorious over Carthage, and was turning her eyes and stretching out her hands to the East. In fact, we are now at the beginning of a duel which was to last for fully 800 years, between the great empire of the East, whether that empire was Persian or Parthian, and that of the West. Even when Islam rose and changed the conditions of the fight, it still went on with different protagonists, and it may well be that it is not finished yet.

The Turk has fought in that quarrel under the walls of Vienna, and French Crusader and English soldier on the hills of Palestine.

There was a century or so of preliminary fencing, in which the little "buffer States" went down, one after the other. Pergamus gave herself over to Rome; Armenia fought one round under her king, Tigranes, but was hopelessly "knocked out" at once by Lucullus. Pontus, however (a people that was really of the tough Armenian stock), gave a very different account of herself. She found a champion in Mithridates, who could stand up to Rome in three great wars, and defeat her armies again and again, though Rome, in her ordinary fashion, does not blazon those defeats in her history. The

Armenian's methods were grim. Romans remembered at least one act of his with horror—the fact that he began one of the three wars by the massacre of every Latin-speaker within his borders, to the number of eighty thousand. Roman strength and endurance won at the end, of course, but generals like Sulla and Pompey did not win easily. In fact, the last named was generally held to have been saved by his usual luck from a very awkward situation ("the best of luck was his all his life, till at the last it turned"), when Pharnaces, the son of Mithridates, turned traitor and broke his fierce old father's heart and resistance alike by the act. Mithridates committed suicide, but he left one strange legacy behind him to affect the West, as well as the memory of a fierce resistance. This was Mithraism, the ancient religion of which his name proclaimed him to be a follower and which was spread in the Roman Empire by those followers of his cause whom his conqueror, for the sake of security, dispersed in various colonies. That cult of the "invictus comes," the God of Light and Truth, spread throughout the Empire; wherever there was a camp of the legions, there was a "Cave" or "Lodge" of his Freemason-like followers, whose memorials are to be found on the Tyne, the Danube, and the Ebro. Even when it went down before a purer form of religion, it stamped its influence pretty deeply on it, as can hardly be denied by those who observe the birthday of their Lord at the winter solstice, even if they do call it Christmas Day.

Mithridates died in 63 B.C. and the fact left Rome

and Parthia face to face, rivals for the empire of the East. Indeed the Parthian was no unworthy rival, and we see in Horace the reflection of the impression that he made on the Rome of his day. That writer is never tired of referring to the awe felt by the Roman legionary for the "sagittas et celerem fugam Parthi," and it was a long time before the generals of the Empire found the right answer to the tactics of the horse-archer, "versis animosum equis."

It is interesting to see that his descendant the Turk, though we think of him as a tough infantryman now, was still employing that same mode of fighting in the days of the Crusades, and Richard Cœur de Lion seems to have been the first man to think out a really effective way of meeting him. "The Parthians, who now hold the empire of the East," says Justin, "have as it were divided the empire of the world with Rome. Thrice have they gone to war with the Romans, and alone among the nations have not been their equals only, but in truth the victors over them."

The first of these great defeats was the first occasion of contact, the destruction of Crassus at Carrhæ. Then the Roman army was nearly wiped out, and the bulk of it made prisoner. Only one officer came well out of the débâcle, that Cassius who was afterwards the chief in the plot to murder Cæsar. The prisoners were established as colonists by their captors at Merv, where their descendants may be at the present day. Horace again tells us what a shock it was, to hear that some of them had settled down and made the best of their lot (*Od.* III, v.),

though the remedy he puts into the mouth of Regulus would hardly abate the scandal. To get the captured eagles surrendered as a favour was counted as a triumph for Augustus (*Od.* IV, xv.).

A better general than Crassus, Mark Antony himself, also found the Parthian too much for him. Invading their country from Antioch, he was only too glad to get half his army out again by the road of Tabriz and the lake of Urmi, leaving all his "artillery" and baggage behind him. "I never appreciated the work of the Ten Thousand Greeks before," he was heard to say during the campaign. Then a third Roman army was destroyed under Nero. A struggle for the control of Armenia—a matter that was to be a *casus belli* for generations—had caused the dispute, and Artabanes of Parthia had made peace impossible by writing an open letter to Tiberius, in which he advised the Emperor to commit suicide, "for bare decency's sake." War followed, but the army that Nero sent to avenge the insult to the Empire was defeated and forced to capitulate like that of Crassus, and in the peace that followed, Parthia secured all the fruits of victory. Her candidate for the throne of the kingdom of Armenia was allowed to rule there, which implied that the border district in dispute was left under Parthian control, and to borrow a modern phrase, "in her sphere of influence." As a sop to Roman *amour propre*, the prince in question was allowed to pay a visit to Rome and receive a crown there;—the sort of sham triumph that might appeal to Nero.

Greater emperors than Nero were to find the

Parthian a foe whom they could not subdue. Trajan and Severus could overrun the land, having learned to take military precautions, and to enlist native auxiliaries who could meet the enemy on his own ground, but they could not hold the country. The fact was, that with the means of transport then at its disposal, Roman organization could control no more than it had. The army was of a certain fixed size, and it would seem that financial considerations forbade its increase, even if the men could be found without a form of conscription that was not then possible. If, however, any real disaster were to befall, say, to the legions that defended the eastern frontier, it might take the better part of a year before they could be reinforced from the Danube, and that would be done at considerable risk. On the other hand, the Parthians, though their country was very difficult to invade and hold, were not formidable as invaders. Great frontier raids were always possible, but the raiders were always glad to retire when they had got as much as they could carry, and a horde of Parthian horsemen could do nothing against a fortified city.

The organization of the Parthian Empire was of the loosest description. Their instincts were those of the nomad, and indeed they had hardly emerged from that state of life when they attained to empire; they were gradually growing out of it and being weakened by the civilization they strove to adopt, during the period of their rule. In this also they present a parallel to the development of their Turkish descendants.

The various provinces of the old Persian and Seleucid Empires were left alone, on the payment of a certain amount of tribute to their overlord; they were governed by their own sub-kings, of the old royal houses,—a privilege that seems to have been extended even to the old royal house of Persia,—and these sub-kings or satraps were often at private war with one another. The Parthian army consisted almost entirely of cavalry, the infantry being a mere rabble, and the siege train non-existent. Even when that of the whole Roman army under Antony fell into their hands, they were unable to make any use of it, and could do no more than burn it. Their cavalry, however, was most formidable. It consisted in part of the swarms of light horse-archers which the Romans were to copy in a later age, and which their own descendants were to use against the Crusaders at Dorylæum and on many another field; heavy horse, a corps of lancers, in which man and mount alike were clad in chain-mail, were also used, and they must have been relied on for the final charge after the ranks of Roman infantry had been wearied and shaken by the hours of archery-fire, to which they could make no reply. The bow, however, was so thoroughly the Parthian weapon that even these "cuirassiers" also carried it, though in other matters they must have looked much like the Norman chivalry as shown to us on the Bayeux tapestry, saving that the use of horse-armour belongs to a later age, in the West.

While using the bow thus freely, neither the

Parthian nor the Roman seem to have realized how much more formidable that weapon can be in the hands of an archer who stands on his own feet to use it, and can thus bend a far more effective bow. English archers in the long French wars always fought on foot, but were often mounted for the march. They were the most effective force of their day, but in the Parthian period the bow was very far from being as effective as Richard I was afterwards to make his favourite weapon, the cross-bow, or Edward I the "long" English variety. Still, it could win the day for its users, and the finest weapon could hardly do more.

As it was their policy to leave the subject kingdoms free, Parthians naturally left the cities, and other internal communities in their empire, large rights of self-government. The cities were, to a very great extent, Greek or Greek-influenced. Very many of them were "Alexandrias," cities founded by the great Macedonian in his brief career. It is one of his many titles to greatness that he had obviously the eye to see where a city would prosper, and would found settlements there. This is by no means usual. The sites of "Freak-cities," founded by some king on a site that caught his fancy, and given his name with the intent that it should be thereby commemorated to all time, are common enough all the East over, but very few of these have endured. Most of those set up by Alexander remain, and are important to this day. The one in Egypt—his favourite, and where he intended his body to rest—is of course familiar to

everyone, but some of the others, while remaining, have disguised their names. It is not everyone who can recognize the name of the founder in "Scanderoon," "Kandahar" or "Secunderabad." These cities were, of course, centres of Hellenic influence in the Empire.

Communities which, like the cities, had a certain distinct life of their own, were also left to enjoy that life by the Parthian rulers, who were content that subjects who were content to be subject, should go their own way in all matters which did not affect the government.

Among these communities, the most important was the Jewish, who had their own organization in Babylon as they had in Egypt, and were even allowed a "millet-bashi," or head of the nation whom they themselves called the "prince of the captivity." The Babylonian portion of the nation was less conspicuous than, but as wealthy and as important and probably as learned as, the portion of the nation in Jerusalem. Of course it was counted as a part of the "dispersion."

The Assyrian stock, still resident in the provinces about the ruins of Nineveh, where Mosul, Arbela, and Kirkuk were already great cities, seems to have been left to its own customs in the same way. Its individual life was far less conspicuous than that of a Greek city or a Jewish community, for it had neither centre to focus it nor chronicler to record it. In due course, however, Christianity was to provide the one, and historians arose to produce the other.

A curious instance of the pertinacity of their life may be found in the development of the Syriac language. All the various Semitic languages, spoken in the lands between Babylon and the Mediterranean, had racial affinities, and it was natural that a common "lingua franca" should grow up among them. This "Syriac" seems to have been at first the common vernacular of the kingdom of Aram (hence "Aramaic"), and then the language of diplomatic and commercial intercourse; it appears as such in the episode of 2 Kings xviii, 26. Rabshakeh, the Assyrian official, when asked by the Jews to "speak in Syriac, and not in the Hebrew, that the common people can understand," replies in effect: "Yes, you would like it, would you not?" and continues to use the Hebrew that the garrison can hear.

This Syriac language, which is the direct derivative from Hebrew and Assyrian, two tongues which had very much in common with one another, soon became a vernacular, spoken all over Mesopotamia, "Syria," and Palestine. In the last named, it was the vernacular in the time of our Lord, who spoke it habitually, and the fact has left plain traces in the Gospel story, though the narratives as they now stand were written for Greek readers. At least one of the Gospels—that of St. Matthew—is known to have had a Syriac original, though the relation between that original and the Greek version that we now have, is a problem into which we need not enter here.

From being a vernacular language, it soon deve-

loped a literature, though one which was largely translated from the Greek, and it could even give a name to a district. The province of "Syria" known to the Romans did not refer to any country ever occupied by any "King of Syria," but simply to the land, under Roman dominion, occupied by Syriac-speakers. There never was a "kingdom of Syria," properly so called. That so described in the Old Testament was known to its own inhabitants as Aram.

Syriac remained a vernacular, spread over a wide district, including the kingdom of Edessa with which we shall have to deal later. In due course, however, another conquering speech took its place, with the rise of Islam and the rule of the Arabs. Arabic displaced Syriac, and continues to be the spoken speech of "Syria" unto this day. Of course the change was not very great, for the two languages are both of the Semitic group, and have a good deal that is common, both in grammar and vocabulary; still it was the definite acceptance of another tongue, brought in by a new conqueror.

Syriac underwent the usual development of languages in its position. It became the vernacular, not of educated people and of the great world, but of country districts and remote provinces, as it still is. Up to the days of the Great War, Syriac was still the vernacular of a small group of villages in the Lebanon, and of a few tiny cantons in the mountain districts of Kurdistan. It also became, in ceasing to be a spoken tongue, the language of literature and of religious services. To this day,

the liturgy of large numbers of Christians of the Monophysite confession, whose language for the purposes of daily life is Arabic, is read in the Syriac that their fathers spoke once, but which they have themselves ceased to understand.

The king of this varied empire, and the immediate ruler of the Parthian stock that was the ruling caste in it, was the head of the sacred Arsacid House, in which was embodied a sanctity that had come down through the ages, and which the members of it had brought with them from their home by the Caspian. Just as in the days of their Turkish descendants, there was something of a mystic halo attaching to the House of Osman, so that any member of it was not quite as other men are, and it was impossible for a Turk even to think of any ruler for the Ottoman Empire who was not the head of that House, so it was with the Arsacids. It was sacrilege even to strike a member of the sacred family, and the person of the King himself was holy in a more special sense. The crown was his by right divine, and regicide was a crime past the conception of man.

Officially, the policy of the King and of his house was phil-Hellenic. This was even expressed in his title, in which he called himself the Friend and Protector of the Greeks. In his age the Greek had ceased to be a political danger to anyone, or indeed a factor in the political game at all, while he was still the leader in civilization and art, both of them influences which the royal House of Parthia seems to have wished to bring to bear upon the

people. This being so, it was natural that the Greek cities of the Empire, each one of which was a focus of Greek influence, should be protected and fostered by the ruler, and everything done to encourage them to live their civilized life undisturbed, and to spread their influence upon all within their orbit.

The fact that the Parthian King held it necessary, and part of the rôle he had to play, to patronize Greek art and civilization generally, appears from one well-known episode. The drama of the Bacchæ was being performed before the court at the time that the news of the great victory of Carrhæ was received, and it was actually announced to the King in the words of the drama, when the actor who took the part of Agave, mother of King Pentheus, appeared upon the stage with the head of Crassus in his hands and so presented it to the ruler, with the words, "We have hunted down a mighty beast to-day."

In like fashion, it was the proper thing to have the palace decorated with paintings of Greek myths and Greek triumphs. Europa and Andromeda were constantly pictured there, we read from one who saw them, and even the battle of Thermopylæ, despite the fact that, if the Parthians appeared there at all, it was as a contingent fighting on the side of the King of Persia.

This suggests a culture that, so far as it existed at all, was borrowed and not native. The Parthian was outwardly civilized, as civilization went then, but the instincts of the nomad and the barbarian

were not very far down, and might come up to the surface unexpectedly. In this again he has much resemblance to his Turkish kin, whose taste for splendid and ostentatious building he would seem to have also shared.

Of this we have an instance in the Palace of Hatra, the one survivor of many splendid palaces of the Arsacid dynasty which are known to have existed, and which have perished under the hands of their successors. It stands in an oasis in the desert, some fifty miles to the south-west of Mosul, and thirty from the nearest point on the Tigris, the ancient city of Assur. No doubt it is owing to this isolation that it has escaped the destroyer, and remained what it is to-day, an "habitation for flocks," but an unusually well-preserved ruin. It is this position, far from any water save what it commands, that has also rendered the city of which it was the centre so singularly difficult to besiege, so that it was able to defy the Romans twice, at the very zenith of their power, and under the leadership of such emperors as Trajan and Severus.

As the one surviving instance of Parthian architecture, it has real importance in the history of that art, though the importance would be greater if it were not so probable that the Parthians, like the Turks, originated nothing in art, but were content to use the powers of their subjects to produce the grand buildings which their sense of majesty demanded. One suspects that the stately arches of Hatra are no more really Parthian in provenance—even though a Parthian King built them—than the

great mosques that the Ottoman Sultans built at Constantinople are really Turkish architecture. The fact that the Sassanid House used the same style for their palaces, though they are hardly likely to have copied the work of the unloved Arsacid, suggests that both were making use of an older type of architecture that came down from an earlier age.

Be that as it may, the plan of the central block of the palace, which is all that remains, is simple enough, but very telling. It consists of a series of "tunnels," each with a "wagon-vault" to roof it, placed side by side and facing south. The central one of the group is higher than the rest, and probably formed the royal reception-room. If, as is likely, this building formed one side of a great court, into which this "diwan-khana" would open, we can trace the survival of the plan, not only in such Sassanid buildings as the "Takht-i-Khosrau," of the great palace of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, but also in many houses of the nobility of later date in Mosul.

The religion of the Parthian kingdom was a mixture. The instincts of the race seem to have been for king-worship, the head of the Arsacid House being regarded as personally semi-divine. In practice they had to temper this, in order to hold the obedience of the Persian nation at all, by a certain respect for Zoroastrianism. The Magi, the priests of that cult, were too strong a clan and corporation for even the sovereign to despise their discontent, and if they were conciliated, the worship paid to the office of the King was not at all contrary to their own teaching.

Thus, a working agreement was possible between the two powers, and the result of it was interesting. It was under the heretic Arsacids, and at the bidding of one of their kings, Valageses, that the holy books of Zoroastrianism, the Avesta, were collected and codified, and in fact put into the form in which they exist to-day. It is quite possible that the Magians felt that their religion was more or less on its defence, and must be ready to give an answer as to what was or was not according to its teaching, and so proceeded to define what, under orthodox princes of the Achæmenid House, they had been content to leave nebulous. Still, the process would have been impossible under a king who was not at least conciliatory.

Underneath both cults, and side by side with them, there existed a substratum of the popular faith of the people, the old nature-worship that is by no means extinct to-day. Holy groves, trees and springs, were revered, and there was no doubt a recollection of the old gods of Babylonia as well. As magical arts going back to the very origin of that civilization are still practised, centuries of Christian and Moslem influence notwithstanding, it would seem natural to infer that these primitive forms of worship were then even more conspicuous and habitual.

It was in this period of Parthian rule, and in this religious milieu, that Christianity was first preached in Assyria. The faith was brought by teachers who arrived in the country from Edessa, though they may or may not have been actually of that

State. Till motor traffic altered the conditions of travel, it was practically impossible to get from Syria to Adiabene (the ancient name for the province of Mosul) without passing through the city in question.

Edessa was then the capital of Osrhoene, a little buffer State on the Euphrates, lying between the empires of Parthia and Rome. Its life was brief, hardly longer than that of another such, viz., Palmyra; but, like that State, it had the importance which a buffer State always may have for the period of its existence. Though part of the Syriac-speaking world, it was ruled by a dynasty of Armenian stock, the House of Abgar, and is counted by the historians of that race as a part of their "empire." Actually, its independence lasted about two hundred years; it was in existence before the beginning of the Christian era, but was overrun and annexed to Rome as a mere preliminary to the big campaign against Parthia in the days of Trajan, and was thereafter part of the Roman Empire.

In that brief period, however, some years before the end of the first century, Christianity reached the little State, and received a welcome there. It even seems that one of its princes became a Christian, though we need not feel bound to accept as historical the tradition that Abgar of Edessa corresponded with Christ, offering to him an asylum from the hatred of the Jews, and receiving in reply a letter with a portrait of the Lord, and a promise that the city that had declared its willingness to

receive him should be ever protected against the attacks of its enemies. The tradition, however, must be of very early date, for it would appear that it must have sprung up previous to the capture of the city by the Emperor Trajan in the year 115, and purely pagan legends of a miraculous immunity promised by some power are still current in the town.

Growing up thus in what was then an independent country, the Church of Edessa long retained a character of its own, and it was from that centre that the missionaries went on to the empire of Parthia and the land of Adiabene. Tradition kept the names of the first two teachers, viz., Adai (which is Thaddæus) and Mari, and it appears that they were in the country before the end of the first century, and had consecrated the first bishop of the land—a convert from Magianism named Pqida—as early as A.D. 104.

Later belief held that Adai was either one of the twelve apostles, or at least one of the "seventy," and it is not impossible that such was the fact, though Armenia also claims Thaddæus (perhaps because of the connection of Edessa with that land) as the real founder of her national Church. This teacher seems to have lived out his life in Adiabene, where he is said to have died in peace at an age of over a century. The story goes that Mari went further, evangelizing the land of Babylonia,—though the capital Seleucia would have none of him,—and even going down the Persian Gulf "till he smelt the smell of the apostle Thomas in

India," but the accounts that remain of him are far less reliable. It is undoubtedly the fact, however, that Christianity, spreading rapidly elsewhere in the land, struck no root in the capital till a good deal later, and the tradition that the evangelist was so discouraged by a failure there, as to request leave to return to Edessa, has the ring of truth rather than of legend.

Whatever success or failure attended the efforts of Mari in the south, there is no doubt that Christianity spread very rapidly in Adiabene in the north of the land. There, the peasants were of the old Assyrian stock, and their folk-memory may have preserved much of the Babylonian religion which the Assyrians held in common with their kinsfolk there. One of their myths told of a creation of man from the dust of the earth, a being who was yet so feeble that he could not stand erect under the sun before the gods, but grovelled on the ground. For this reason Bel-Merodach, first-born of the great father, Ea, offered to give his life, and was beheaded, in order that his blood, being mixed with the clay, might produce a newer and nobler creation, that should partake in measure of the nature of the divine. Those who had such notions woven into their minds, might readily accept the teaching of a God who died to save, and who by the gift of his body and his blood could infuse his own life into man.

The Parthian government raised no objection to the propagation of the new religion. It was not officially and theoretically tolerant, for it was not

organized enough to enforce such a notion, but it simply did not care and did not interfere. There was even hope at one time of procuring a formal edict of toleration from the King Valageses, about A.D. 160, and the project only failed because the outbreak of a war with Rome put so unimportant a matter out of the King's mind.

If there was no State persecution, there was one very powerful corporation that was hostile to the spread of Christianity, and that was the Magian clan. While the faith spread only among slaves, peasants and artisans (and it is probable that the general rule held good here, and that extension was speediest among those classes), nothing was said; when, however, the "squire" class of Persian blood began to be infected, it was time to do something. Thus we do find cases of persecution, either by the Magian authorities or by family action, of converts from among their own number and entourage. It was not, probably, State action, but that of a great corporation which a government that was not very strong did not care to thwart. When a man of local distinction, like the Agha Raqbokt in the year 160, declares himself a Christian, it is the Magians who demand that the local governor shall act, with law or without it.

As a general rule, however, Christianity had a fair field in Parthia, where toleration was almost as complete as was possible at that time. Hence, it spread rapidly, and after only a century and a quarter (in A.D. 225) the chronicler could already enumerate more than twenty bishoprics. Naturally

there were times when Christians had to suffer, in common with all others, from the incidents natural to a disturbed kingdom.

Roman invasions and raids made little mark, being regarded by the historian as part of the course of nature, like an occasional flood. They are signposts by which to date a chronicle, rather than causes for astonishment or complaint. Notices of the descent of hordes of robbers from the mountains of Kardu are at least evidence that the Kurd of those days was what he had been since the days of Xenophon, and is still. It was one of these invasions that made it impossible for the Magians to take effective action against the "renegade" the Christian Agha Raqbokt. The King found his local knowledge and local levies to be absolutely necessary in the emergency, and there could be no further talk of proceeding against him for apostasy, even to oblige the Magians.

There was, however, one specially dastardly form of persecution from which Christians had to suffer then, and suffer still in those lands, or did until very recent days. This was the kidnapping or "capture" of their daughters as either slaves or concubines. Let a girl be thus carried off into the household of some powerful family, and some sort of confession of Zoroastrianism—or of Islam—be extorted from her, and then, even if the local authority can be bribed into action by her relatives, how can the "convert" be abandoned to "a false faith"? In days shortly before the Great War, the Christians of Mesopotamia used to lose as many as

1,000 girls per annum in this way, in spite of the cross, tattooed on their foreheads, to mark them, and the earliest of their chroniclers complains of the custom as existing in the second century. Little changes in the East. Once let a girl be thus captured, and few can find the strength for a life-long confession of their Lord, a confession none the less meritorious for being absolutely unknown. Still, in these days as in the second century, such hidden saints have existed, and do exist.

Still, while Parthian rule endured, if the Christians had something of the same troubles to endure as was the case with them when the Turkish descendants of the Parthians began to rule in the land, yet on the whole their position was tolerable. The coming of Christianity had given to the old Assyrian stock a focus, on which they could unite their old national feeling, and which could arouse in their people a sense of union.

Meantime, the Church was organized and self-governing. It had received from its Western brethren the system of government that was universal throughout the world (Bishops, Priests, and Deacons), and before the rule of the Parthians had ended, the Scriptures had been made as accessible to them in their own vernacular as the circumstances of the day would allow. That is, the Syriac version of the Old and New Testaments on which the "Pshitta" version of a later day was based had already been made, though one can hardly say that it was widely circulated.

The Assyrian Church, too, had produced at

least one scholar of distinction, though it would seem that his work was not done within the borders of his own land. This was Tatian, compiler of the first harmony of the four gospels—the Diatessaron—who seems to have been born in Assyria, and to have produced his work as early as the year A.D. 170.

The land had also produced a great, if not very regular theologian, in Bar Daizan or Bardesanes, "the Son of the Star." If in his theorizing he mingled Christianity and other philosophies, till authority would not admit the product of his dreaming as Christianity at all, he at least gave to the world the first version of "The Pilgrim's Progress" in his wonderful allegory of "The Search for the Lost Robe."

CHAPTER III

THE ASSYRIANS UNDER THE SASSANID KINGS

In the year A.D. 225 there was a rebellion of the Persian provinces of the Parthian Empire, under the sub-king of the district, Ardashir. The Arsacid King, Valageses IV, took the field against him, but was defeated and killed in single combat by the rebel, and with him the Parthian Empire ended. What had happened was not just the substitution of one king for another, or even of one dynasty for another. It was a rising of the old Persian stock which had been in eclipse since the days of Alexander, and the beginning of the second Persian Empire, that of the House of Sassan, which was to last for four centuries, till the old life of the East passed away for ever with the rise of Islam. It was the period of the last of the old empires, A.D. 225–640.

In the minds of men of the age, this was a revival, not a new creation. Of old, the Achæmenid House had been the anointed of the Lord Ahura Mazda, possessed of the "Hvareno" which was the mystic halo of kingship. Though it was over five centuries since the House had fallen, the notion that the right was theirs had not died out. The Parthian Arsacids had felt obliged to put in a claim to be of

the blood, and though the assertion was impossible to the point of being ridiculous, the fact that it was made shows how important the right divine was felt to be. Now, the new royal family, being of Persian stock, had to make the same claim, and though it was absolutely unhistorical, it served its purpose. They said that Artaxerxes II, King of Persia, had no son living at the time of his death. Before his brother, Sassan, had actually assumed royalty, a posthumous heir, that Darius who fell before Alexander, was born to the King's widow, and Sassan loyally recognized his prior claim. Lest he should be made into a cause of strife to the realm, he abandoned the world, becoming either a shepherd or a smith and so living out his life in obscurity. One sees the Zoroastrian mentality in the choice of the walk of life made by the hero; another civilization would have made him a hermit, but to a follower of Zoroaster, that was impossible.

Now the Persians rose to empire again, and the leathern apron of the royal blacksmith became the royal standard of the House.

A claim thus made has to be emphasized in all possible ways, and so we find the kings of the second royal House of Persia copying and reviving the institutions of the first. Their imperial body-guard is a corps of "Immortals." The kings keep the old names of Cyrus and Artaxerxes (Khosrau and Ardashir), and have a fair cause of complaint against the Greek historians who disguised the fact which they were at such pains to proclaim. Greek writers seem to think that it proves their civiliza-

tion never to take the pains to get a "barbarian" name right,—and indeed are not alone in the notion. Thus, they are not even consistent in their blundering versions, and without special training, it is not easy for the Western to recognize that Chosroes and Cyrus are versions of the same Persian name.

The claim to continuity with the old House was put forward, not merely as a means to win prestige, but as a part of a deliberate policy. Sons of the old Achæmenid House, they claimed the whole Achæmenid heritage. All Anatolia, or Asia Minor, was theirs of right, to their thinking, and they are constantly calling upon the Emperor of Rome to confine himself to that which they admitted to be his,—to the countries north of the Bosphorus.

Is it possible that we have here an early version of the cry "Asia for the Asiatics" that we are beginning to hear once more to-day?

Naturally, the mere making of such a claim as this implied a series of wars with Rome, and lest this should be insufficient of itself to provide excuse for battle, fortune had seen to it that there should be two other and additional *casus belli* always to hand. These were (A) the question of the control of the provinces about the city of Nisibis, where was the Alsace-Lorraine of that day, a district which both could claim, providing a passage into the territory of the enemy, and a gate that could be shut in the face of an invader; (B) the problem of the control of Armenia, that restless land which was almost sure to be inviting the

power that did not control it at the moment, to protect it against the "tyranny" of its then suzerain. Only such a miracle as the simultaneous accession of two peace-loving rulers was likely to keep the peace for long together between such neighbours as these.

In the series of wars that form a natural feature of the four centuries of Romo-Persian rivalry, the honours on the whole seem to be with the Persians. There is a colossal system of "cross-raiding," in which the one often gets as far as Antioch, and the other as far as Seleucia, but it is the Persians who carry off gigantic "captivities" from the Roman provinces, not the other way about, and one Roman emperor died as a captive in their hands, and another was killed in battle against them. Rome could claim no such trophies as those.

The struggle ends in a veritable combat of giants, the war between Chosroes Parviz and Heraclius, during which, for several years together, the watchers on the walls of Constantinople could see the camp-fires of the Persian no farther off than Chalcedon on the other shore of the Bosphorus. The Persian was never a sailor, and never did the magic spell of a witch stop more abruptly at running water than did the armies of Chosroes on the shore of that salt river. So the war ended with the acceptance by both of the *status quo ante*, and with both empires so exhausted that they fell within a decade to the power of the Arab.

As the Sassanid accession to power was a revival of the old Persian nationality, it was also a revival

of the national religion. We do not know whether the faith of Zoroaster had been the means whereby the life of the nation had been preserved during its five centuries of subjection. We can only say that it would be quite in keeping with the ways of the Orient if it were so, and that it is certain that, when the nation rose, the faith rose with it. The religion of Ahura Mazda, as reformed by Zoroaster about 600 B.C., becomes the Faith, and its organization the established Church of the Persian nation.

With the faith came its hierarchy. In primitive days the Magians were the Levitical tribe of the Persian race, one of the seven clans into which the nation was divided, and the one charged with religious duties. Now they appear as an organized and well-drilled clergy. Magians as such are priests of the fire-temples, Mobeds are the Bishops, each apparently with a diocese of his own; at the head of the whole is the Mobed-Mobedan, who is one of the very greatest of the dignitaries of the State. He can rebuke even the Shah-in-shah himself, if he so far forgets himself as to act tyrannically. "Mend your ways, son of Sassan, or——" He has at his command the Magian at the fire-temple in every village, and where altar and throne are counted as inseparable, the Mobed-Mobedan is very nearly as powerful as the King. It seems that if the King shall depart from the faith which it is his duty to guard, the prelate may even issue a "Fetva" proclaiming him deposed, like the Sheikh-ul-Islam in latter-day Turkey.

What is taught by this formidable hierarchy is

the old faith of Ahura Mazda or Ormuzd, as reformed by Zoroaster and now reissued by the Mobeds. As we have seen, one of the precautions taken by that body during the long subjection had been to codify their religion and to stereotype its ancient scripture. The Avesta has now taken form in its canonical books. Perhaps this accounts for one curious fact. We have noted that Mithraism, the offspring of the religion of Ormuzd (for Mithras was originally only a subordinate god in the Persian Pantheon), had extended itself in the West after the fall of Mithridates and the foundation of colonies out of the remnant of his army. This cult was now flourishing all over the Roman Empire. There was hardly a camp along the frontiers where men did not gather to worship Mithras, the first-born of Ahura Mazda, the effulgence of his glory. Yet, in his own country, when the faith of which his teaching was a branch had risen to supremacy, we hear nothing of him. It would seem that his cult had extended in a way comparable—*mutatis mutandis*—to the cult of Our Lady in Christendom. Then there came a reaction, and in Sassanid days the faith that the Mobeds taught was the ancient belief, as reformed by Zoroaster. That great man was of the nature of a Protestant reformer, and removed the "secondary god" from his system. There is nothing of Mithras, the Mediator and Comrade, in his teaching, and it was the faith as he had stereotyped it that the Mobeds taught now. Whether popular religion consented to give up the *invictus comes* is another question.

Still, it was the faith at its best that was taught in Persia in the days before its fall, and its influence on the character of the nation produced a type of man that was in many respects very fine. The Persian in Sassanid days still kept much of the tradition of Cyrus, being taught "to ride, to speak the truth, to draw the bow." He was by nature, as his descendant still is, a lover of hunting and of horsemanship, and there must have been much that was fine in the ages that produced two such games as polo and chess! As soldiers, Persians under the House of Sassan became even more formidable than the Parthian had been, keeping his dash and adding science to it. Their social and government system was practically feudal, the landowner paying, as of course, military service to the King; and thus, as in Europe in later days, the strength of the army lay in its "chivalry," the armoured knights. These were drawn from the "Azatan," the free tenants-in-chief of the King, and they came to war under his leading, clad in chain mail, and mounted on big heavy horses, specially bred for the work, and also mail-clad. Naturally, the swarm of light horse—the horse-archer that Rome now copied—was kept up, and the infantry were better than in Parthian days, thanks to the example of the corps of "Immortals." Elephants were used in war, and the Shah-in-shah had what the Parthian never could rise to—a regular siege train.

This force was well disciplined and drew its regular pay, as appears from the story that the King of Kings, Chosroes Anushirwan himself, was

called to come on parade, as part of his duty for certain fiefs that he held. There he was duly inspected and sent back to barracks as "improperly equipped!" He had neglected to supply himself with the two spare bow-strings that every cavalryman had to take into the field.

The very fine doctrine of Zoroaster, that he who did aught to increase the dominion of Life—human, animal or vegetable—was increasing the realm of Ormuzd thereby, and fulfilling a religious duty in the act, was sure to make the land prosperous. The great irrigation system of Mesopotamia was at its best in Sassanid days, and we are assured that the whole of the great delta was one garden; a squirrel might travel from Seleucia to the Persian Gulf without ever having to come to ground. Under that hot sun, it is the land under the shade of the trees that produces the best crops, so that the significance and value of the forest is apparent. The traditional engineering knowledge needed for the upkeep of the great dykes was still available, and the Shah-in-shah felt that he had inherited the duty of caring for them from his Babylonian predecessors. Sometimes his measures were grim. We hear of one case when carelessness had allowed a formidable breach to appear. Chosroes crucified forty overseers at the breach itself, and filled it up by marching the cultivators into the water, to form a living wall with their backs. Earth was then heaped around them, and they were buried there alive. It was the King's order that the wall should be re-made, and on its repair depended the life of

the whole province whence those cultivators came; so the men died,—as Arab sheikhs in later days have called on their followers to die also.

In early Sassanid days, the Christian Church in the country was left alone. It had its old status, but was in more danger than before, for the reason that the Magians—always its most dangerous opponents—had now more power than in the time of Arsacid rule.

The reasons why a faith so high and noble as that of Zoroaster should have felt a hatred so special for one even higher, are worth a moment's study. They are stated in a royal firman of rather later date, obviously dictated by the Magians, and revealing the popular feeling.

"These Christians destroy our holy teaching, and teach men to honour one God, and not to honour the sun, or fire. They defile water by their ablutions; they refrain from marriage and the procreation of children, and refuse to go out to war with the Shah-in-shah. They have no rules about the slaughter and eating of animals; they bury the corpses of men in the earth. They attribute the origin of snakes and creeping things to a good God. They despise the servants of the King, and teach witchcraft."

In other words, the Christians were men of different habit to the Magian and therefore abominable, like the foreigner in China to-day. Some of the habits complained of might have been amended by Pauline teaching about respecting the prejudices of others, and some of the charges were at

most only half true, like the one about service in the army; but there was ground enough for such a race-hatred between Zoroastrian and Christian, as we see to-day in India between Moslem and Hindu.

Active persecution, however, did not break out until the conversion of Constantine had made the Roman Empire officially Christian. After that, every Christian was politically suspect. It was not possible for the Persian official to believe that the "rayah" or subject who followed the religion of the Roman enemy was not a sympathizer with that enemy, and Roman authority provided any excuse that was needed. Constantine, most ostentatiously and tactlessly, claimed a protectorate over all the Christian subjects of the Shah-in-shah,—and then went to war with him. Christian powers have repeated the blunder in later days with the Turk.

The first of these persecutions lasted forty years, and was full of every kind of horror. One must not, however, think of these movements as proceeding, in the East, in the orderly and relentless style of the Roman Empire. An imperial firman for the destruction of churches and the killing of such Christians as would not adore the sun was issued, but in the East a firman is not so much an order as permission,—the standing order being, "thou shalt do nothing at all." It was the release of a race-hatred, normally held in check, to do its will on its objects, if men liked; there were many ways of escape besides the ordinary slackness of the Oriental official. Still, for about a century and a half, whenever there was war between the Persian and the

Roman—and we have seen how frequent that was sure to be—there was persecution for the Assyrian. Of course there were intervals of peace, and in one of these we find a sort of Charter, or Edict of Milan, issued by the Shah-in-shah for the benefit and government of the whole body.

By this act the King of Kings (Yezdegerd "the Wicked," who was looked on by the Magians as almost an apostate for his pains), recognized the whole Assyrian Church as what a later age was to call a "millet," a nationality organized in a Church under its religious authorities. The authority in this case being the Catholicos or Patriarch, with five "Metropolitans" and about forty bishops under him. The "millet" had the right to exist, and to worship in its own way, being controlled in internal matters by its own Patriarch. It had not, however, the right to make converts, or at least not from the "established religion" of the State, then Magianism. All this, too, was only *durante beneplacito Regis*. If the Shah-in-shah found any cause to suspect the subject "millet" of disloyalty, he was still entitled to take the only precaution that an Oriental potentate understands, and order persecution or massacre. The precedent thus first set has often been repeated by Mahommedan rulers over Christian nationalities.

This qualified toleration was secured to the body by an episcopal ambassador of the Roman Empire, one Marutha, who was also a physician, and had won the gratitude of Yezdegerd in that capacity. He was able to announce what he had won to the

Church at the first formal council of its members of which we have knowledge, held in A.D. 410. At that council the body also accepted a document of which it had previously had no official knowledge —the Creed of Nicæa.

Hitherto the Assyrian Church had been absolutely isolated from the West, and as lasting schisms had not then come into being, there was no other local Christian body in question. Armenia had not then a Church of its own. To its great benefit, it had known nothing of the weary Arian controversy, for its bishops, being outside the Empire, were not present at the Council of Nicæa. Fifteen years after the assembly the leading theologian of the Assyrian Church—Afraat, known as "the sage of Persia"—uses language which shows plainly that he had simply no knowledge of the question discussed there, no matter on which side his sympathies would have been.

Of course, the existence of the Assyrian Church was known in the Roman Empire, though not by that name; there it was known simply as "the Church of the Easterns," a term which meant to them, speaking in Constantinople, "the lands to the East of the Roman Empire." In exactly similar wise, "Easterns" to us means, Christian Churches to the East of us in Europe, in Constantinople and Asia Minor. When Assyrian bishops refer to "the Westerns" in their turn, they do not mean even Antioch, far less Rome—a city that was not above their horizon at all—but the bishops of Nisibis and Edessa.

Now this Eastern or Assyrian body accepted the Nicene Creed in the form in which it was put forward by the Council of 325, as fully accordant with what they had always taught. It is their heritage to this day, though usage has with them, as with the Westerns, altered its wording without affecting its theology.

Though recognized now as a "millet," with a right to exist when the Shah-in-shah did not happen to be at war with Rome, the Church was still as much liable to persecution as ever on the frequent occasions when Rome and Persia were at war, for it was still as much as ever "suspect" by the Persian government. For about seventy years these periodical massacres were endured, but one cannot wonder at the growth of a feeling which may be thus expressed: "We are Christians, and cannot ever give up our faith. But, can we not do something to show the Shah-in-shah that we are not precisely the same brand of Christian as those in the Roman Empire, and therefore need not be massacred every time he happens to have a quarrel with the Emperor?"

Another feeling was also present in their minds, and those of other Christians within the Roman Empire, at the same time. We have seen that the national instinct was strong in the people, and this naturally tends to express itself in what the nation cares most about—its religion.

Greeks, however, were then the ruling power in the Roman Empire, and they were much inclined to regard the Christian Church as their natural

heritage, in which they had the obvious right of the fittest to rule. Where there was a national instinct, as in Egypt or Syria, this tendency was resented, and in a day when theology was the only form of politics known, the natural and easy way to show that resentment was to take up any theological slogan of the moment which happened not to be in favour with the Greek, and to make the maintenance of it a point of national honour.

In the fifth century, the theological question of the hour was that known as the "Christological." We do not propose to enter into that tangled dispute, the details of which can be found in any standard theological work, while the problem as it affects the Assyrians more particularly is discussed in the writer's own book upon the matter.[1]

Briefly, the question was this. It is admitted that Christ was Divine—a question settled in the Arian controversy. That being so, how is this Divine Being also Man? Various answers were given, for theology of the most abstract has an interest for an Oriental that is unintelligible to any Western, with the possible exception of a Scot. Broadly, the Greeks were the better theologians. That is to say, their efforts at expressing in words a spiritual truth that is beyond all human language were less unsatisfactory than those of their opponents. The Orientals, however, both in Egypt, Syria, and Persia, had, as we see, a natural prejudice that made them disinclined to accept any Greek explanation, whatever its merits, and an inclination

[1] *History of the Assyrian Church.* S.P.C.K.

to support any man whom Greek authority had condemned!

Here, when the matter did come before them, they had what was undoubtedly a good case, in the question of the condemnation of Nestorius. Whatever the merits or demerits of the doctrine of that unlucky Patriarch of Constantinople, there was no doubt that his condemnation was unjust. In the tribunal that condemned him, the Council of Ephesus, Cyril of Alexandria, his personal enemy, united the posts of accuser and presiding judge, and then proceeded to pack the jury by refusing to admit any who might be possibly friendly to the defendant.

About A.D. 480 then, all these questions came up together: the desire to be free from persecution; the resentment at Greek dictation; and the instinct of the expression of national life in the religious sphere. It so happened that, at the moment, the practical leadership of the "millet" was in strong and not very scrupulous hands, namely those of Barsoma of Nisibis, a man who appears to have united the posts of Metropolitan Archbishop and Warden of the Marches. With the influence derived from both of his ranks to back him, he organized the Church on a footing of distinct separation from the "Westerns" in the Roman Empire, and introduced other reforms, calculated to reconcile a Persian government to its Christian subjects. He passed a law, in a council held for the purpose, laying it down expressly that all bishops and clergy might marry, thus offending the growing instinct for celibacy in

the Greek Church, and conciliating the sentiment of the anti-ascetical Zoroastrians. He also took advantage of the break-up of the great college at Edessa—to which Assyrian youth had hitherto gone to seek education—and established a great school within Persian borders at Nisibis. It was at once the worthiest and most lasting piece of work that Barsoma accomplished in a chequered and picturesque career. The great university into which his school developed was the means by which his nation, in after days, were to instruct their Arab masters, and a later chapter will show how important that work of theirs was for the world. All this was done by this vigorous prelate in the intervals of political intrigues and his work of suppressing border raids!

The separation of the Assyrians from the Church of the Empire was by no means settled finally by the work of Barsoma. The Easterns gradually came to realize that there had been a reaction in the West against the Council of Ephesus to which they objected, and that its work had been revised at Chalcedon. Then there was also a reaction in the East against some of what Barsoma had done, and the Assyrian Church found herself under her greatest and most saintly Patriarch, Mar Aba, who attempted reconciliation.

The Council of Chalcedon was definitely accepted as a matter of faith and—though modern Assyrians have rather forgotten the fact—it is still formally recognized by them to this day! Then, just when formal adjustment of the difficulty seemed

to be easy, things went wrong. Certain men dead in the peace of the Church—Theodore of Mopsuestia and Diodore of Tarsus—whom Assyrians counted as saints, were condemned improperly in Constantinople, in the hope of appeasing a faction there, and the drift into separation continued. Soon each party was employing technical terms of its own in the controversy, terms not translatable by either into the language of the other, or into English; and each was too sure that the other was wrong, to listen to any explanation.

Actually, estrangement had not crystallized into formal separation before the year 620, or only just before the Mahommedan conquest made reconciliation far more difficult. It was at just the same date that the national Churches of Egypt and Syria—the "Monophysites"—also consummated their separation from the Greek, and thus presented Islam with that permanently divided Christianity which was to serve as so firm a foundation for the rule of Turks over Christians for so many centuries.

To add irony to the position, any one of the separated Churches, either then or now, would have accepted any orthodox confession that did not use the technical terms that had become matters of dispute. To this day all could agree to use the "Athanasian Creed" loyally, so far as its doctrinal portions go, while the "Damnatory clauses" that form a stumbling-block to the modern Western are no obstacle whatever to the Oriental.

When once the Church was thus put in a position

of comparative security, and organized on a self-governing basis, its extension was marvellously rapid. Christianity is essentially an Oriental religion, and when presented by Orientals to Orientals it appeals to them as it was intended to do. So the Assyrian Church, without any of the paraphernalia of missionary societies and elaborate subscription lists, was able to extend itself by its own natural growth in the very districts that are the despair of all Christian Missions to-day. Early in the sixth century we find bishops and archbishops in such centres as Merv, Herat, Samarkand. What would we give for a native Christianity in those centres to-day? Yet so national were they that the churches in Samarkand were known as "the Persian temples." Wanderers of the nation—for the Assyrian of the sixth century was like his descendant of the nineteenth, and the instinct of the wander-lust was strongly developed in him—took their faith with them when they went to the nomad Turks of Tartary, to India, and to Central China. Bishoprics seemed to grow up there naturally, without hesitation or delay. One wanderer "from Persia" is even said to have got to the extremity of the West, and to have penetrated the Island which the Byzantine Procopius, writing at the period, thinks of as the abode of departed spirits, so thoroughly had the Romans forgotten the Britain they occupied not long before. The Persian left a reminscence of his name, Ivon, at "St. Ives."

In their own country, Christians often occupied high positions. They were great merchants, and the

medical profession was almost their monopoly. Under Chosroes II, the Grand Vizir Burgmihr and the chief of the tax-farmers, Shamta, were both Assyrians. One thousand pieces of gold per day was the sum that the latter contracted to pay the Shah-in-shah, for the taxes of the provinces that he farmed.

The Church had, in a word, accepted its position as in the Persian Empire, and in consequence the Assyrian stock, with its Syriac language and its Syriac liturgy, had become part of the general machinery of state. In many ways their position resembled that of the Greeks in the later days of the Ottoman Empire. They did not provide the army, for the good reason that the army was closed to them; but in all the machinery of government and of daily life they were the source of the indispensable machinery, which the Persian—landowner and sporting squire—was no more capable of supplying than was the like-nurtured Ottoman of Asia Minor in a rather later age.

While the Assyrian stock had thus been making its own way, the lot of the Armenian, that rather unstable buffer, had been developing on different lines. For some time after the revolution that replaced the Sassanid House on the throne, the Armenians had been content to be in the Persian sphere, in spite of the fact that their ruler, the sub-king of the land, was an Arsacid by descent. Then Zoroastrian zeal offended their prejudices. Some iconoclasts of that religion—the Magian had an almost Mahommedan dislike for "graven images" —broke the ancient and sacred statues of the Sun

and Moon that adorned a temple in the Armenian capital. This produced a revolt about the year 297, and the Armenians, true to their old habit, called in the rival empire of Rome.

Diocletian, then Augustus, was glad to take them as allies in the next act of the endless Romo-Persian war, in which he was very successful. Galerius, his colleague and general, was sure that he could subdue Persia once and for all if he were allowed to go on; but Diocletian, more cautious, held him back, and was content to make peace on the terms of the cession of the "Debatable land" of the Nisibene provinces to Rome, and the acknowledgment of the fact that Armenia was henceforth "in the Roman sphere."

The fortresses that Diocletian built, to cover the approach to Nisibis, and to guard the pass between that plain and the Armenian tableland, are still in existence. Armenia was given a sub-king, one Tiridates, a man of the old Arsacid stock, but a trusty ally of Rome.

Only four years later, there was a development that Diocletian—who was just then commencing the persecution that we associate with his name—could hardly have expected. Tiridates turned Christian and proceeded rather forcibly to make his faith the faith of his people. Still, the Armenians were soon to give an instance of the fact—not unknown elsewhere—that a religion that is dictated by force at first, may come to be accepted by a nation as the very core of its life. Diocletian was surprised, but seems to have concluded that he need not

sacrifice a political ally on such grounds, and very soon the fact that Constantine succeeded him, gave the Armenian sound reason for seeking the Roman alliance.

The conversion of the Armenian King is a romantic story. Tiridates had been as sound a persecutor as Diocletian could desire, and when a cadet of his House, Gregory, went to Cappadocia for education and came back a Christian, he promptly dropped him into a dungeon. Soon after, the King was afflicted with a "Nebuchadnezzar-like madness," the result, men said, of his having offered violence to a Christian virgin, S. Rhipsima. Gregory, having been taken from his prison, cured and converted the King, who then made him the first Archbishop of what was the first national Church of history. This was in the year 310. Soon the Church developed its own Liturgy, under the influence of the Church of Cappadocia (and in the days of St. Basil and St. Gregory there were no better teachers to be had); a successor of Gregory, Isaac the Great, gave the Armenian nation its own alphabet to take the place of the Syriac, the Semitic symbols in which the Aryan stock had till then tried to express its language.

Isaac's alphabet, if awkward to English eyes, is so well fitted to the Armenian language, that every sound has its letter, and no letter more than one sound while those who have acquired the language say that it is easy to transliterate into those symbols and to express in them the sounds of any tongue.

As usual, the Armenian proved but a wavering ally politically, partly because in the next Persian war the Roman emperor was Julian, who went out of his way to insult a useful ally for being a Christian. On his defeat and death, the country passed to the Persian sphere again, and then was divided, Persia obtaining the "lion's share." A native sub-king was left at first, but the quarrels of his subjects soon reached such a point that they—in spite of the protests of their Archbishop at this act of national suicide—asked to have a Persian "Marquis," or Marzban, in his room. This was soon followed by persecution, the Persian trying to enforce a confession of Zoroastrianism on the subject people, and it is admitted by the Armenian historian that many of the nobles gave up their faith in order to save their lordships. In the end, however, the Shah-in-shah came to the conclusion that Christianity was so thoroughly the national faith that the effort to convert the people was more dangerous than profitable, and they were left to their own religion.

Very shortly, however—and the development must have been very welcome to the Persian statesmen—the process that had brought about a separation between the Assyrian Church and that of the Empire began to tell in Armenia also. The Greek habit of treating Christianity as a piece of Greek property, and as a means of "Graecizing" the other nationalities, caused the Armenians to declare themselves separate from the Church of Constantinople. It so happened that the theological slogan which

the Armenians took up in opposition to the Greek was a different one from that which had appealed to the Assyrian, in that the imperial council that they objected to was Chalcedon and not Ephesus, and their peculiar heresy was "Monophysite" and not "Nestorian." All non-Greek nations in the Eastern Empire of Rome (such as the Egyptian and the Syrian) took up the catchword that was condemned by the Greek bishops there, and the Armenians followed their example. Thus, by a development that the Persian officials must have found as convenient as the Ottoman did in later days, the two subject races of Christians in their borders were separated, not only from "the enemy" in the Roman Empire, but from each other as well.

Again, we consider it to be more than doubtful whether the Armenians, who thus refused to express their Christian religion in Greek technical terms, really meant to teach the heresy of which the Greeks held them guilty. The "Nestorian," as men called the Assyrian, did not mean to teach two personalities in Christ, and the "Monophysite," as men called the Armenian and Syrian, did not mean that the humanity was annihilated. In both cases the matter was a confusion of technical terms, which could have been explained had either side in the quarrel really desired a reconciliation.

Hitherto we have only spoken of Christianity as in contact with Zoroastrianism. Actually, however, there were other religious movements afoot in Persia, that had an importance outside the borders of that realm. One of these was the "Manichæan"

movement, of which the prophet was Manes, born in the third century A.D. His doctrine assumes the dualism of Zoroaster, the two kingdoms of Light and Darkness, which the Persian personifies in the figures of Ahura Mazda and Ahriman. On this, however, Manes grafts a strict and pessimistic form of asceticism. To the Zoroastrian, life was admittedly a battle between good and evil, but in the long run the good must overcome. Meantime, it was the duty of a good servant of Ahura Mazda to fight evil and to increase good in all ways, notably by begetting fresh sons and servants of the Lord.

To the Manichæan the world was utterly evil. Some sparks of good and light had got entangled in it, no doubt, probably by the fall of some celestial spirit in a pre-mundane life; they might, perchance, be saved out of it, but the world must perish, and the sooner the better. The good and enlightened man would refrain from propagating his kind in such surroundings. It is not altogether surprising that a cheerful and loyal Zoroastrian like King Bahram summed the position up thus: "This fellow would destroy the world. Clearly it is my duty to destroy him." And destroy him he did, having him flayed alive, according to one account, and hanging up his skin before the gate of the capital as a warning to all and sundry. Though the prophet was martyred, the cult continued, and it took over certain aspects of Christian teaching. Christ appears to it as one of the great spirits that have come down into this world from above, though—seeing that matter is essentially evil—

it is quite impossible that he should have really become man, or really been crucified. What hung upon the Cross can have been no more than a phantom. This doctrine, which was taught by other men before Manes, seems to make a strong appeal to certain Oriental minds, for it persists to this day as the orthodox teaching of Islam on the subject of the crucifixion. The root-doctrine of Manichæanism, viz., the essentially evil nature of matter, makes a very strong appeal to many Eastern and to some Western minds, lying as it does at the root of much asceticism.

Thus the brotherhood, which had an elaborate system of ranks, and a hierarchy of its own, persisted in Persia for many generations, having its supreme father or Pope at Babylon first, and in later days at Samarkand. Its philosophy appears again in the West, in later days, doing very evil work when it taints the mind of St. Augustine, and reaching formidable dimensions when it prompts the Albigensian movement, but it is doubtful whether there is any direct connexion between this and the Eastern Manichees. It seems to be rather a tendency in the human mind, that may appear on the surface of it at any age or in any country.

The beginning of the sixth century saw another movement of an extraordinary kind in Persia—something that we can only describe as an early version of what the twentieth century has learned to call Bolshevism. Mazdak, a Persian noble of high rank, proceeded to preach, and to some extent to carry through, a drastic reform of Zoroastrianism

and the old social system of Persia, which amounted to a communistic revolution. All men were equal, said this very modern-minded zealot, and all life was sacred. All property was common, and property included women, or at least it was said that such was the case, perhaps only by the enemies of the new prophet. Vegetarianism, humanitarianism, and in fact all the modern "isms" that a later age thinks are its own peculiar inventions, were proclaimed by this sixth-century reformer.

The new gospel received an amazing welcome, sweeping the country for the moment in a way that one can only explain by the suggestion that the rigid caste system of the old Persian nation, with its seven tribes, had provoked a great deal of suppressed resentment. This fact may very well explain the equally striking success of the gospel of Islam a century later.

It was not only those who had everything to gain, but those who had most to lose, by the new doctrine, who welcomed its preachers; one is inclined to suggest such a wave of socialistic enthusiasm as that which marked the early days of the French Revolution. The nobles abandoned their rank; even the Shah-in-shah himself, Kobad, became a "brother" of the cult, and is said to have surrendered even his harem to his "brethren in the faith."

The spectacle of an autocrat turned communist suggests rather the realms of Gilbert and Sullivan than sober history, and a student feels that some sort of explanation of the phenomenon must be

found. One suggestion is that the King had a real political object in his seeming madness, and that he sought to use the new movement to break the power of the nobles, and of the Magian caste. If so, he failed in his object; the forces of conservatism rallied, and the "Mobed-Mobedan," or head of the Magians, issued such a solemn "Fetva," or official declaration, as the Sheikh-ul-Islam could once pronounce in Turkey, in reply to a formal question. "If Zeid, who is Caliph of Islam, apostatizes from the faith, is it lawful to depose the said Zeid?" By such a declaration, or its equivalent in Zoroastrian form, Kobad was deposed and imprisoned in the "Tower of Oblivion," the ominously named Loches of the Sassanid kings. To depose the Shah-in-shah, however, was a terrible step to take. No man dare take the vacant place, and Kobad, assisted by his wife, escaped from his *oubliette* and claimed the throne once more.

It seems that he had learned his lesson, and henceforward, whatever his private opinions, he would rule as a Zoroastrian.

Disappointed in their royal proselyte, the Mazdakeans attempted to play a political game, and rose in revolt. On this Kobad, in association with his son Chosroes, whom he had joined with him in rule, read them a terrible lesson. He called all the chiefs of the movement, some hundreds in number, to a conference, and himself entertained their leader Mazdak at a banquet. The feast done, Chosroes invited the aged prophet (who had been his own tutor) to come out "and see some trees of the King's

planting." Mazdak came, and saw long rows of the feet of his own friends, projecting from the pits in which they had been buried alive by the King's order! The teacher was himself seized and impaled, at the head of that terrible garden, and the movement was thus stamped out in the blood of its leaders. There was to be no reform of Magianism, such as might perhaps have saved it when the day of its trial was to come.

In the seventh century the duel between Rome and Persia, that had lasted for more than four hundred years, reached its climax and its end.

Chosroes II, "the victorious," who at the beginning of his reign had had to ask support from the Roman Emperor Maurice against a rebel in his own land, declared war against Rome when Maurice was murdered by the ruffian Phocas. Nominally, he was out to revenge a friend; actually, he hoped to win the whole "Achæmenid heritage" at last, and for the moment he actually did so. An amazing series of triumphs put Syria, Egypt, and Asia Minor in his hands, and the fact that he built palaces in the conquered provinces is evidence that he really intended to hold them. When he was in occupation of Chalcedon, and looking across the strait at Constantinople, he could afford to neglect the fact that a detachment of his army had been cut up in Syria by raiding Arabs, and could laugh at a letter brought him from their leader, one Mahommed ibn Abdallah, calling on the Shah-in-shah to recognize him as the prophet of God.

Meantime, in its hour of distress, the Roman

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Empire had found a man, and one who appreciated the value of sea-power. Heraclius, striking alternately at Alexandretta and Trebizonde (for he was able to leave sea-girt Constantinople to guard herself), entirely subdued the Eastern Empire in a series of marvellous campaigns. At last came the collapse of Persia, the miserable death of the "victorious" king, and the proposal for peace between the two exhausted combatants, on the basis of the *status quo ante*.

Heraclius now showed himself a man of great dreams as well as of mighty deeds. He sought not only for the restoration of peace to the Empire, but to the Church as well, and longed for the reconciliation of the Assyrian and the Armenian Churches to that of Constantinople.

For a moment it seemed that he had actually succeeded. Ishu-yahb, the Assyrian Patriarch, came to see the Emperor, charged with the return of the True Cross, a relic captured by the Persians when Jerusalem fell, and returned under the terms of peace. Emperor and Patriarch discussed reunion and soon came to an understanding, sharing together in the holy Mysteries; this understanding held good between the Emperor and the head of the Armenian Church.

Unfortunately neither leader was able to carry his followers with him, for in all three parties the zealots were sure that "those others" must certainly be wrong. Assyrians suspected Greeks; Greeks had no great faith in the orthodoxy of the Emperor, and none were able to hold friendship

with those of different custom to themselves. How was it possible, for instance, for a decent and orthodox Greek to hold communion *in sacris* with those Armenians "who did not mix water with the Eucharistic wine, and who did not eat either eggs or cheese on Saturdays in Lent"?

So nothing was done, for the Christian nations were irrevocably divided, and ere long those who had rejected the union saw the followers of a united Islam sweep over them all alike.

CHAPTER IV

LIFE UNDER THE ABBASSID KHALIFS

THE brief period 636–642 saw the overthrow of the historic empire of Persia by the Arabs, and the conquest and occupation of their country by that new force. In itself, the actual conquest was not extraordinary. A country exhausted by a long and terrible war, and under the rule of a King who was the one weakling and craven of his long line, was suddenly attacked by a fresh foe, full of all the demoniac energy which the Jehad gives to those who believe in it, an army in which every soldier was a fanatic, and fought like a volunteer in a forlorn hope.

The battle of Cadesia—one of the decisive days of the world's history—gave Mesopotamia to the Arab, and with it a spoil the richness of which the conquerors could not understand. Then followed a period of Arab migration into the newly conquered land, which soon became Arabian. The invaders settled down with their families, they mixed with the old inhabitants, who were, after all, of kin to their stock, and made the land their own. Mesopotamia, however, was not Persia, and Omar did not intend the conquest to go farther, and even forbade advance. Still, the soldiers were

not to be held, and the resistance made to their attack was far less formidable than they must have expected. A respectable defence of the castle of Shuster against a foe quite inexperienced in the art of siege; a battle at Nehavand, in which the Persian general was out-manœuvred by the Arab, was all the resistance put up against them, and the thing was done. By 650 the last of the House of Sassan had died, much like the last of the Achæmenids, as a refugee at Merv, and the Christian Bishop of that place gave charitable burial to his remains.

But Persia, though overrun, was not colonized as the Mesopotamian provinces had been; the country remained Persian, but, strange to relate, the Magian religion collapsed and Islam was readily accepted in its room. The faith of Ahura Mazda had been the religion of the people since time began. Thirteen centuries before the Arab conquest, it had been reformed by Zoroaster, but it remained the same. The race had been tried by foreign conquest before, and during five hundred years of subjection the faith had kept the nation in life. Now, at the moment apparently of its full strength, when it has all the organization and prestige of an established Church, it passes like a dream.

A very few years after the conquest, it is the faith of a negligible minority, and now it is hard to find a living trace of it in lands where the ash-heaps of its sacred fires form fair-sized hills. It is only in a foreign land, where the very name of its followers proclaims them aliens (Parsis, Persians), that those

followers form a body which, if not large, is influential and most honourable. Persia rises again in due course, as soon as the inevitable reaction against Arab rule has had time to gather strength, but the revival of the nation does not mean the revival of her faith; only the formation of a sect, or series of sects, in Islam.

It was about a hundred years before that revival gathered strength. During that time, the Khalifs of the House of Omayya, the brother of the Prophet's grandfather, ruled at Damascus. Muavia, founder of this "Omeyyad" line, had won his office as the necessary man, to whom Hassan, the son of Ali, had been glad to resign a burdensome throne. When Hussein, the brother of Hassan, rose in revolt against him and was killed at "the place of Martyrdom," Kerbela, sentiment turned against the line.

It was felt that it was stained with the blood of that tragedy, which has always made so strong, if so incomprehensible, an appeal to Persian Moslems; and there was no loyalty left for it. Hate of the "usurping line" gave the spur that was needed, and the Black Standard of the House of Abbas, uncle of the Prophet, was raised by Abu Muslim, who had begun life as a slave of that family. The revolt blazed up, and the general of the Omeyyad Khalif was defeated in a decisive battle outside Mosul, in the great triangle between the Tigris and the Zab. That rolling plain is the decisive field of that part of the world, for thrice it has seen the great battles which have decided the fate of that part of Asia.

Arbela was fought there, though the fight did take its name from the city to which the victors poured to find Darius' baggage train; there Heraclius fought his last and greatest battle with the Sassanid army, and there the House of Abbas won the Khalifate from the House of Omayya. The fruits of victory were made secure by a massacre, when the victor invited ninety members of the hostile family to a banquet, and murdered every one. Only one member of the family escaped, to win a throne for himself in Spain.

The elevation of the House of Abbas to the Khalifate—or at least to the claim to it—is really an act of Persian nationalism and dislike of Arab dictation, for we can hardly think that there was any warm feeling of personal loyalty in Persia for the respectable uncle of the Prophet. It was, however, really a definite breach in the unity of Islam, of which we see the first sign when "the ship was broken, shattered by the storm of Kerbela." The Khalifs of the House of Omeyya were rulers of the whole "House of Islam," as the "Successor of the Prophet and Commander of the Faithful" ought to be. The House of Abbas never attained that. Abd-ur-rahman, the one survivor of the House of Omayya, became Khalif in Spain, which would never recognize the rulers of Baghdad. Soon other claimants to the title rose in Africa, and in Egypt, the line that claimed descent from the daughter of the Prophet, Fatima.

It is true that the founders of this line did not make the claim with any seriousness, but merely

as a means of getting prestige. One of the first of the house, Muizz, was asked by the "Ulema," or doctors of the Law, in Cairo, to produce his pedigree, and proof for the exalted claim he made. Muizz laid a drawn scimitar and a bag of gold before them. "There is my pedigree, and there is my proof"; the Ulema were perfectly satisfied. Others, however, came to believe in their manufactured pedigree as fervently as man does in such cases.

The title of the House of Abbas then to the Khalifate was never undisputed, and the divisions of Islam date from their accession, but for a time they ruled the bulk of the Empire, and that very brilliantly. Mansur founded the new capital at Baghdad, and his son Harun-ar-rashid followed him there. Presently, however, the administration broke down. The Khalifs became the slaves of their own bodyguard of Seljuk Turks, "Begs" and "Atabegs" attained to virtual independence in the provinces, and the Empire practically broke up into several small States, of which Persia was one, while the nominal Khalif and Sultan of the whole could hardly stir out of his own capital. That, however, was far in the future, when Mansur and Harun were ruling in Baghdad.

During the Arab conquest, the Assyrian nation could do nothing but remain quiet, and, in fact, "lie low" and let the storm pass over them, hoping that the blast would do as little harm as might be to their nation. They were accustomed to be regarded by their rulers much in the same light as they them-

selves regarded their bees, and indeed in the collections of omens and magic spells which the wise men among them used, and some of which survive to this day, it is quite proper for the same portent to foretell either a revolution in the State, or an outbreak of swarming-fever in the hive,—the inquirer being at liberty to decide which is more probable or dangerous for himself.

Actually, the coming of the Arabs must have been a relief. For twenty years the war between the two great empires of Rome and Persia had been raging, and though their sympathies may have been with the Christian, there is little doubt that the peaceful cultivators had suffered from both.

Their Patriarch, Ishu-yahb, had just made a concordat with the Emperor and the Church of the Empire, but that vanished naturally, now that facts had made it impossible to carry it out in practice. There was no "orthodox" Church anywhere in the reach of the Assyrian, now that the Roman or Byzantine Empire had retreated to the northern side of the Taurus range. His immediate duty was to care for the well-being of his flock in their new condition, and to make the best terms he could for them with the Arab authorities.

The Arab leaders, representing Omar the Khalif, made no difficulty about this. Christians of the Assyrian Church were to have full security as a "millet" in the land, on practically the same terms as they had received under the Persian. That is to say, those born in the nationality had the right to remain in it and practise their religion, with exemp-

tion from military service. They might repair their churches, but might not erect new ones without permission; they had, of course, to pay the ordinary taxes, with the "kharj" in addition, in substitution for the military service that they could not render and Mussulmans would not accept, though monks were declared to be exempt from this burden. Finally, it was specially laid down that Christian girls who were taken in marriage by Moslems might keep their religion—a rule excellent in intent, but hard to execute in fact.

Hitherto the Assyrians had been practically the only "millet" in the Persian Empire, though of recent years a certain number of "Monophysites" (mostly brought in from Syria in the enormous "captivities" which the Sassanid kings had collected there) had been added to their number, and these had obtained, after some friction, a governmental status parallel to that of the Assyrians. Now, however, whole provinces of what had been the Roman Empire were subject to the Khalifate, including Egypt and Syria, where the mass of the population was Christian of the Monophysite confession. The story of their separation from the Orthodox Church is long and tangled, and perhaps the writer may be allowed to refer students to his own work upon the subject.[1]

These now settled down on the same terms as the Assyrians, under their own Patriarchs. The Copts, the Christian population of Egypt, hardly came into touch with Assyrians at all, but the "Syrians" or

[1] *Separation of the Monophysites.* Faith Press.

Jacobites (so called from the monk Jacobus Baradæus who had organized their body) were their near neighbours. They had their Patriarch at Antioch, who in later ages came to reside in a monastery near Mardin, and a "Mafrian," or Archbishop, who was in theory the head of those in the Persian Empire, and dwelt in the monastery of Sheikh Mattai, near Mosul. His *raison d'être* had really ceased, now that all of his "millet" were under Arab rule, but that did not hinder his continuance in office.

The Assyrian Church, when once the storm of war had passed and things had become normal, was now prosperous, wealthy, and widespread. How widespread we may see later. Toleration extended to the point of its being allowed to hold councils, which under a Moslem government is to go far indeed. So long as a subject of the government keeps to what authority is used to and follows precedent and routine, all is well. Anything unusual is suspect, and any attempt to rise to a new situation is held to be dangerous. *Omne ignotum pro terribili* is the rule. The Assyrian Church and nation then settled down to the life of a "millet" under Mahommedan rule, which means that for centuries it had little history. The life of such a Church is uneventful, and it is well that it should be, for most events are of the nature of disasters. The life of a soldier under the conditions of modern war was once described as "an eternity of boredom, enlivened by moments of acute physical terror," and that of a Church under Arab rule

was an eternity of dullness, enlivened only by occasional risk of massacre, when anything occurred to irritate authority, and to incline it to take the only precaution that the Mahommedan understands.

These sudden storms might blow up on the instant, out of the clearest sky, for the government was eternally suspicious. One eighth-century Patriarch, Khanan-Ishu, remarked casually once that Islam ruled by the power of the sword, not by Grace. It was one of those perfectly true statements that it is not well to make, for the Khalif Abd-l-melek happened to hear of it, and the Patriarch thought himself lucky to get off with a heavy fine—or bribe to some official—and a term of imprisonment. Sometimes it was the intrigues of unworthy Christians that caused the trouble, as when one Isa, doctor to the Khalif Mansur, demanded a bigger douceur of the Patriarch Jacob II than that prelate would give, and the doctor in revenge whispered some accusation into the ear of the Khalif, and procured the imprisonment of all the Patriarchs.

Fortunately, the plotter on this occasion spoilt his own game by going just a little too far. He told the Patriarchs that the Khalif was proposing to destroy all the Christian churches, but that for a heavy bribe he, Isa, would persuade him to show mercy. The Patriarchs went straight to Mansur, and he, a good Moslem, was furious at the notion that he would deny to "rayahs" a right that the Faith expressly guaranteed to them. The rascally doctor

was impaled for slandering the Commander of the Faithful, and the Patriarchs released.

Not that the churches were always safe, even so. Harun-ar-rashid, who was liable to fits of fanaticism, once actually issued an order for the destruction of all of them in the province of Basra, because they practised relic-worship in opposition to Koran. It was only the influence of Zubeydeh his wife which induced him to rescind the order.

Of course, the Khalif had no real confidence in corporate Christian loyalty. Individuals might be his favourites, and rise to wealth, influence, and even real power; the "rayahs" as a whole could not be trusted, and indeed the government did nothing to earn their trust. Once, it is recorded, the Assyrian Patriarch asked for some favour for his people which had been denied to the "Melkites" or Imperialists; members of the Orthodox Church that is, who were Arab subjects, but yet members of the "Greek Emperor's Church." "We of the ancient 'millet' are loyal," said the Patriarch; "we know no sovereign save the Commander of the Faithful." "Loyal?" said the Arab official. "You know that you all hate us alike."

Naturally this relegation to slave status and the perpetual consciousness of degradation (the Khalif Mutawakkil had ordered all Christians to wear a special dress) had its effect in producing the slave character in those subject to it. This means, a spirit of intrigue and low cunning, and a readiness to adopt any dirty means to gain a desired object. There is no national stock, even the proudest and

most self-confident, which could stand such treatment without being lowered by it, and perhaps lowered rather speedily.

Assyrians were not more exempt from this than others. We find at least two Patriarchs, Khananishu and Timothy the Great, confessing to the councils assembled at their consecration to the Patriarchate that they had attained their high office by intrigue and bribery, and by open disregard of the proper formalities. There was this excuse, that no official could conceive any other way of doing anything. The temptation to do some undesirable service for some person in authority, in order that the Bishop may curry favour with that person thereby, and so be in a position to serve his "millet," is always present. Where you cannot depend on justice in the ruler, most men are likely to do evil that good may come.

The career of Timothy the Great gives an instance of this, that has the merit of being at least picturesque. Harun-ar-rashid had flown into a rage with his wife Zubeydeh for some unknown reason, and had promptly divorced her by the triple divorce. Having recovered his temper, the Commander of the Faithful became sorry for what he had done, and was only anxious to take his favourite wife back again, but found it was not possible, according to law. Simple divorce is easily undone, but if a Moslem shall divorce his wife triply, he may not take her back again until such time as she has been wedded again to another Moslem, and divorced by him. No doubt the rule was

laid down by the Prophet to check an evil custom, for "the thing that is allowed, but disliked by Allah, is divorce." There were men until lately in officially Moslem lands, and probably are still, who earned a rather disreputable living by marrying divorcees in this way, and then divorcing them,—for a consideration of course. Either this low trade was not practised in Harun's day, or he felt that to avail himself of it was *infra dignitatem Imperatoris*. Timothy the Patriarch, one regrets to say, made a suggestion that opened a way out. Let Zubeydeh declare herself a Christian, and then, as an apostate, she was dead in law, and all her previous engagements were void, for if a Moslem shall apostatize, all his wives are *ipso facto* divorced. Then she could revert and be pardoned by the Khalif, and be married again to him, and all would be well! Was it thus that Zubeydeh was brought to intercede with her husband for the Basra churches?

At first, when the Arabs conquered Mesopotamia, the power of the Christians was very great, for they were the sole educated class. It is true that the Arabs proved apt learners, and this advantage was lost in a century or so, but for the time it was important. All the learning of the Greeks came to the Arabs, and in measure to the Persians also, through their Christian teachers, who were for the most part of the Assyrian Church.

They had their colleges at Nisibis and at Seleucia, where Plato and Aristotle were taught, in Syriac and later in Arabic, and it was thus that Arabs became acquainted with Greek learning. When

one remembers that after the night of the Dark Ages had descended on Europe, and Greek had been altogether forgotten, it was through Arab professors at Cordova and Salamanca that Western Europe first learnt to know Aristotle once more, one feels that Paris and Oxford owe more to the Assyrian schools, and to their turbulent founder Barsoma, than they always realize.

It is a far cry from Nisibis to Oxford, particularly when the road runs through Cordova, but it seems to have been the way by which Aristotle travelled from Athens to the English universities. Medicine, too, which we have seen was almost a Christian monopoly under the Sassanids, continued in their hands, and it is specially said that Gabriel, the court doctor, was the right hand of the Patriarch Timothy in all his State business, owing to the constant and private access that he necessarily had to the Commander of the Faithful.

The Church was now at its greatest extension. Of the five and twenty Metropolitan Archbishops who owed allegiance to Timothy—and whose names have been preserved in an official list—some were as far to the West as Damascus and Jerusalem, where the Assyrian body had certain rights in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. A "Nestorian" Church of far later date still survives in Famagusta, to show that there was at least a congregation in Cyprus too. South, the Church extended to Sumatra and Malabar, where their witness still survives. North, there were Bishops of the "Tents of the Kurds," nomad prelates of nomad flocks, among

the mountains that were till lately the last refuge of the nation. Timothy's own first diocese was that of "Bait Bgash," which is the little town of Bashkala, to the north of the Kurdistan mountains. East, they were known among the Tartars and Turks, and in distant Balkh there was even the little Christian principality of Taraz, and in a later age the legend-wrapped but yet historical figure of Prester John. Tibet is referred to in the letters of Timothy as the seat of at least a party of priests, and modern travellers are inclined to think that the strange resemblances between the ceremonies of the Lamas in Ladakh, and those of the Christian Church, are probably to be accounted for by the presence of Assyrian or Nestorian missionaries in these remote days.

In China the evidence is more concrete and tangible. There, the proof of the presence of a strong branch of the Assyrian Church is the famous monument of Si-an, the capital of China in those days, which has stood there since the year A.D. 781. The monument has an importance for the science of linguistics as well as of history, for its Syriac-Chinese inscriptions give a key to the sound-values of the Chinese characters of those days which it is difficult to find elsewhere. It bears the name of the Patriarch Khanan-Ishu, though actually erected in the days of his successor, Timothy the Great. The news of the decease of the older man had not reached this far-away branch of the Church in the interval of three years between the fact and the erection of the monument.

We know from Chinese sources that intercourse between the "Celestial" and the "Sublime" Kingdoms (China and Persia) was quite easy and habitual for as long as the latter lasted. The caravan roads were open, save when Turkish raids from Tartary interrupted them. So, where commerce went, religion could go also, and Christianity was extended by men who took and extended their faith wherever they themselves happened to go, without formal machinery. It is a method of proselytizing that Christians knew well enough then, but of which only Islam seems to have kept the secret now, and which it uses with sometimes startling results. Christian monks then were as much given to wandering, and were sometimes as much out of control, as the Moslem Dervish in certain countries of that profession. Thus, Christianity entered China in the time of the "Tsung" dynasty (A.D. 500–900 approx.), and the Si-an monument tells us how the Emperor Tsai, of that House, gave greeting to "Olopen, the first teacher of this excellent, mysterious, and pacific religion" about the year 630. Free leave was given for its propagation, and the Emperor, who was a liberal-minded man and had an intellectual wife, specially ordered a copy of the Scriptures, or at least of the Gospels, to be translated into Chinese for the Empress's library. Twenty years later, there are said to have been monasteries of "this luminous faith" in every prefecture of the Empire, giving evidence of a widely extended growth.

Troubles followed for the Empire, and Christians

had to suffer as everyone else suffered in the general disorders in the reign of the Empress Wu Hon (750 approx.), when China underwent one of the periodical upheavals in which outsiders are apt to see presage of her downfall. Good came out of the evil, however, for a contingent from one of the Christian Tartar tribes (the Uigurs, who seem to have adopted not only the Syriac religion but also the Syriac speech) did good service for the dynasty, and in acknowledgment of their services the Emperor Hsan Tsung (successor to the unfortunate Empress) gave formal edicts of toleration and legal existence to the Christian Church.

His successor went further, giving high honorary rank to the Bishop, who was allowed to wear the insignia of one of the highest grades of Mandarins. This fact is recorded on the Si-an monument.

The Bishop in question, whose name is recorded as "Giwu," an abbreviation of Giwergis, or George, a name still customary among his people, had more than seventy priests under him, and seems to have been a new-comer from head-quarters.

More troubles followed, perhaps in a second big revolt in 783 (that known to students of Chinese history as the Rebellion of Ta Chin), perhaps a little later, when a great persecution of Buddhists and other foreign religions was begun in the year 845. It was probably at this time that the Si-an monument was buried, in order to preserve it (for buried it certainly was, and that before the year 1064, as is clear from other evidence), and it remained concealed till its rediscovery by Chinese

Buddhists and its erection in one of their temple, as a monument, in the year 1623. The temple fell into ruin, but the monument remained, and was placed in safety in the "Forest of Tablets" in 1907.

Chinese Christians suffered along with Buddhists —with whom they seem to have been confused— in the persecution referred to, and an edict of the year 854 survives, in which monks and nuns of alien religions, more especially those from the lands of the Nestorians and of Islam (Ta-Chin and Mohofu), are ordered to return to ordinary ways of life. It is said that the edict was strictly enforced, though what the Chinese authorities understood by Mahommedan nuns is not explained.

Still, persecution did not kill a body so well used to the enduring of it, and the native Church was by no means suppressed. Marco Polo found abundant evidence of its existence in his days among the Tartars, and we shall have strange evidence of the persistence of the faith in China in a later chapter. The further development of this isolated body, however, was rather peculiar. To some extent they seem to have amalgamated with the Chinese of the faith of Islam, but Rubruquis, the Franciscan monk, found them still conspicuous in the thirteenth century. They kept loyal to their Trinitarian confession, as is proved by a Baptismal hymn—given at length by Professor Saeki in his work on *The Nestorian Monument*—which dates either from that century, or perhaps a little later.

Saeki holds that the Christian body probably

became identified with one of the great secret societies of China. All students know how congenial a society of the type of Freemasonry is to the Chinese mentality, and how widely spread the phenomenon is to this day. The Society, which the Japanese professor thinks was really the survival of this extension of Christianity, is or was the "Kin Tan Kiao," or "Religion of the Medicine of Immortality." It was still existing in the year 1891, but was almost destroyed in the anti-foreign massacres of the Boxer movement, as being too Christian—a strange and wonderful addition to the "white-robed army of Martyrs."

While their Assyrian neighbours were faring thus, Armenians to the north of them had their own experiences. They settled down like others, as "'rayahs' to the Khalif of Islam," and as their national Christianity was recognized they were not discontented. The Emperor of Constantinople of the day (Constans II) had tried to rouse them to revolt against the Khalif, with the idea that they might help in the recovery of some of the provinces lost to the Empire. The Armenians, however, had no fancy for the rôle of cat's-paw, and replied to the agents of the Emperor, "You Romans have always called us up to war, and always let us down at the end of it. Now let us alone." The remark was so bitterly true that the Emperor could only accept the reproach and acquiesce in the situation. Unhappily, the policy was one from which the unhappy people who complained of it were to suffer again and again in the course of ages.

Later, the Armenians were themselves nearly ready to revolt without any Roman assistance, so squeezed were they by the Khalif's agents, when taxes were doubled from all the provinces to meet the cost of building the new city of Baghdad. As some sort of consolation, and perhaps as a measure of policy, the nationality was once more allowed to have its own native princes. By grant from the Khalif, the nobles of the House of Bagrad—a family said to be of Jewish descent—were recognized as the hereditary princes of Armenia, of course on the payment of tribute to their superior. So long as that was paid, the delegated power was as complete as it well could be.

It was not quite easy, however, for the new princes of Armenia to get their rank recognized by their own folk. Armenians have never been too ready to obey one of themselves, and this new form of royalty had none of the age-long prestige that had been the inheritance of the extinct Arsacid House. They were just one of the many noble families, and there were others as good as they, notably the Ardzeruni House, which had its stronghold on the citadel of Van, where kings had ruled aforetime. Gradually, however, the Bagratids, in the course of five or six generations, were able to extend and consolidate their power, and to establish some sort of claim to rule, not only in Armenia proper, but in the Cilician mountains to the south and west of it, in the neighbourhood of Antioch, though not over the plain district where the city stood.

It was an age when monasticism was the force in

the Church, and monasteries sprang up everywhere. The Armenian royal house, knowing that its power depended very largely on the national Church, fostered its schools and institutions everywhere in its dominions.

In the course of a century or so, virtue went out of the Abbassid House in the way that it always appears to go out of all Oriental dynasties. Power over the outlying provinces slipped from its hands, and the empire of the Arabs (who have never shown the organizing genius of the Roman) became little but a collection of independent provinces. A *fainéant* Khalif at Baghdad was its titular head, but he was only a puppet in the hands of his own guards. Armenia was but one of many districts where princes had set themselves up, and become practically independent, though other rulers were naturally Moslem, and called Amirs. The Bagratids took the title of King, and were crowned to that dignity by the Catholicos of the Armenian Church, at Ejmiadzin. Soon they built themselves a capital, and one worthy of their new dignity at Ani, a place the ruins of which still show that the Armenian has been able to develop an architectural style of his own, which may owe something to the Byzantine, but yet is really independent of it, and is in its own way equally impressive. No church of the nation is of any very great size, when compared, for instance, with those the Normans were raising in France, in the very days when Ani was in the building. Yet no style has succeeded so well as this in making small dimensions impressive,

and in giving a "value" to the whole of a moderate-sized building. It has never been the fate of the Armenian, however, to be left long at peace, even when the peace is won legitimately by his own efforts. Ani was building in the year 975. By the end of the century, the year 1000, the Seljuk Turks were on the move, and the pains of the birth of a new era were beginning to rack the world.

CHAPTER V

THE AGE OF THE SELJUK TURKS

WITH the coming of the year A.D. 1000, mankind everywhere was expecting the end of the world. It was so written in the Apocalypse, that when the thousand years were expired, Satan should be loosed out of his prison, and should gather the four quarters of the world to battle, Gog and Magog, whose number was as the sand of the sea. There was every reason for believing that all had happened as had been foretold, when the age saw the coming of another great storm of invasion from those very Cimmerian lands of Meshech and Tubal, such as Ezekiel had seen once in days long before the seer of Patmos, and to which he had given the name that the later writer adopted. These great periods of *Volks-wanderung* come on the world now and then, though the causes of them may be known only to Allah the All-knowing. Certainly the one that began in the year A.D. 1000 was by far the greatest and most terrible since the parallel one some six centuries before which brought down the Roman Empire of the West. That, too, had taken another direction, falling directly on Western Europe, so that the civilizations of the East had no knowledge of what they were now to undergo, and

no parallel to it nearer than that great invasion of the Scythians in 600 B.C. that has left its impress in the words of the prophets Ezekiel and Zephaniah.

It would seem that all the tribes of Central Asia, hard mother of men, were seized at once with a "swarming-fever" such as that which will sometimes beset a hive of bees. All were on the move, not quite together but one after the other in seemingly endless procession.

Of course there had been infiltration before. There was always a small but steady stream of migrating nomads of the stock, coming in from the plains of Tartary and Central Asia to the more fertile lands of Anatolia and Mesopotamia. Hitherto, however, these immigrants had been only small groups or septs, who would settle in the country and become naturally subject to its government. The Khalifs of Baghdad found them good but dangerous material for a "Prætorian" guard. They would keep their own way of life, and often their own language, though as a general rule they adopted the religion of the land: Islam in Mesopotamia, or in Anatolia where the Greek still ruled, that of the Greek Orthodox Church. Hence arose a phenomenon that was to cause, in our own day, a good deal of surprise, viz., the existence of many small groups of "Turkish Christians" in Asia Minor, who were admittedly of the stock and tongue of the ruling race, but of the religion of the subject one. They were Turks who had been there before the Turks came in, and had kept their identity for a period of a thousand years.

When the catastrophe of 1922 developed, and all of Greek stock were expelled from that Anatolia where they had dwelt for centuries before the Turk left Central Asia, many of these groups were expelled with them, faithful to the fact that in the East it is always religion that is the determinant of nationality. It is to be feared that they were almost as completely strangers, and as unwelcome, among the Greeks whose religion they followed, as among the Turks who regarded them unfairly as renegades.

In the eleventh century this movement had hitherto had no political importance. Now all the tribes of Central Asia were "swarming," or to vary the figure, a flood of waters was loose, that was to wash over all China, all the "Middle East," and much of the West up to Hungary and Poland.

These tribes were known to us and to the men of the age as the Mongols or Tartars. Actually, it seems that each of those appellations is the name of one tribe only, and that the race at large, not conscious of itself as a unity, had no name common to the whole. Mongol seems to mean "brave" and Tar-tar or Ta-ta, "move-move" or nomad. Others say that the latter word is Chinese for barbarian. The whole race was known to civilized men, by a process which has often been repeated, by the title of the first tribe with which they happened to come in contact, members of which, when asked what they were, described themselves by the name of their own people.

Like the Huns of an earlier age, who were of the

same stock as themselves, they were bent solely on destruction. It was not an invasion so much as the migration of a people; women and children came with them, the women carrying the babies in a cradle on the saddle-bow; their horses were their cattle and their food, for they drank mainly mares' milk and ate horse-flesh. At times they might halt, plant some corn, and when it came up reap it and proceed; but while others planted for them to reap, what occasion was there for even that labour? Hitherto, the civilizations of an older age had largely survived, from Persia west to the Ægean; now they were to go. It was not that the invader had any conscious quarrel with them, any more than a flood has a quarrel with the crop over which it sweeps. They happened to be in the way, that was all. Generally the invader did not even ask the name of what he destroyed.

First of these hordes to break on civilized land was that of the Turks who followed their Chief Seljuk, and were known by his name. As invaders they were bad enough, but not to be compared with those who followed, for they were more civilizable than others, and had already accepted Islam. Their leader, Seljuk, had two sons, whose names show that he had already received a certain amount of teaching, perhaps from a Jewish source, for they were called Israil and Mikhail. Israil came somehow into touch with Mahmud, afterwards to be known as the "Tiger of Ghazni," the first and most fanatical of the Moslem invaders of India. He asked the Seljuk about the strength of his tribe, and

was told, "If I send these five arrows to the tents of my fathers, for each arrow a thousand men will mount and ride. If I send my bow, ten thousand more will follow in their track." Mahmud judged that it was better to detain so formidable a visitor, and Israil vanishes from history. Mikhail, his brother, was the father of the really great leader of the race, Toghrul "the Falcon" (obviously the Jewish influence had passed), who led the tribe from Tartary into the comparatively civilized province of Khorassan. The Khalif thought it more prudent to send the invader a message of greeting, acknowledging him as ruler and vicegerent, under the "Successor of the Prophet," of the province from which he had no means of expelling him, and Toghrul, content with what he had got, ruled quietly till his death in 1060.

It was just about the time that another great Conqueror in the far West was beginning to meditate the move that was to turn his Norman dukedom into a kingdom, that Alp Arslan (the Lion) led his invasion into the civilized lands of Anatolia. A warrior pure and simple, and a great archer, with the personal peculiarity that his moustaches were so long that he had to tie them together behind his neck when he went into battle, lest they should hamper his "drawing hand," Arslan's one idea was invasion, and the fact that his father, Toghrul, had received investiture of the lordship of seven realms from the titular "Commander of the Faithful," gave him a religious sanction, as a good Mussulman, for everything he chose to do against the enemies of the Faith.

Thus it was on Armenia, the Christian power, that Toghrul and Arslan turned their arms. Such tribes of Turks as lay on the frontier of that country had already started raiding, and their leader, Khudrig, had given some idea of what was to come by indulging in a bath of blood drawn from his slaughtered captives. With such an attack pending, it was the obvious interest of the Byzantine Empire to support the buffer State that was their shield, and in the early years of peril they had an Emperor who may be supposed to have had sufficient intellect to see what was needful. Basil the Bulgar-slayer was still living (it was an age of great warriors) and he was actually in the Cappadocian "theme" or province, in Central Asia Minor, so that he had ample opportunity of knowledge of the situation, and it is certain that he at any rate had an adequate grasp of the strategic problem. Possibly he in his old age lacked the needed energy, and the weaker men who came after him lacked the brain. Whatever the reason, Constantinople failed to support Armenia in the hour of her need, and left the "heretic" to her fate,—to her own ruin.

It often happens, too, that Orientals lose their heads in an emergency. Quarrels among themselves are their bane, and a great danger is apt to bring out that spirit instead of suppressing it, and so it was with the Armenians at this time. Their King, Kagig II, fell into despair and only thought of saving himself, offering his crown to the Byzantine Emperor in exchange for some tributary principality in a safe province. As a matter of fact, the

thing did not exist just then in the Empire. Thus, when the attack came, there was but little resistance, and, at his first effort, Arslan was able to ravage Armenia at his ease, up to the northern shore of Lake Van. Still local minds hold the memory of the awful sack of Arjish, then a large town on the lake shore, and now a decayed village. A year or so later, the great invasion was continued; Alp Arslan stormed Ani, the capital, in 1063, and the Armenian kingdom, properly so called, came to an end.

Then, when it was too late, the Empire bestirred itself. Its army took the field under a gallant hothead, the Emperor Romanus Diogenes, and underwent at Malazkurd in 1071 one of the great defeats of its history. Romanus, though he fought gallantly enough himself, was as completely out-generalled by the "Parthian tactics" of the Turkish horse-archery as Crassus had been upon an earlier field. Practically the whole army was destroyed or taken, —the Emperor being himself a prisoner, and to lose thus the one highly trained, professional army of the Byzantine Empire was a much more serious blow then than it had been in republican days. To replace what had been lost was a question of years, not just of the dispatch of fresh legions. The Turk passed on into Anatolia, and all those provinces, the whole of Asia Minor, fell permanently under his rule.

This conquest was the ruin of what had hitherto been the heart and base of all supplies and organization of the Byzantine Empire. Centuries of gradual civilizing had built up a wealthy dominion, and the

Seljuks came in as mere destroyers. All went down before them, and when the Crusading armies, thirty years later, passed through what had been a land of great and ancient cities, they found nothing but a wilderness of ruins and briars. Even now, a thousand years later, the traveller can see from the magnificence of those ruins, or of what remains of them, what the grandeur of a greater age must have been. One great capital may stand, reversed, as a mounting-block at the door of a khan, or the lid of a great sarcophagus may serve as a water-trough in what is now a mud-built village. No doubt there had been decay before, from plague, misgovernment, and the like, but now everything was cast down to the level of a Tartar encampment.

It is true that the Seljuk was not devoid of the instinct of his Ottoman successor, and when he had thoroughly destroyed what was before him, he did use the powers of the race which he had enslaved to build up something for himself. It is the expression of his instinct for "majesty," and the buildings that a later Seljuk put up at Iconium and other places are by no means to be despised. In like fashion a later Mahommedan conqueror appreciated the value of S. Sophia in Constantinople.

If Alp Arslan had little power of appreciating the civilization that he ravaged, his successor, Malik Shah, was of a different stamp, and he had a minister who was even greater than himself. This was the celebrated Nizam-l-mulk, the patron of Omar Khayyam—who, by the way, is known in his own land as an excellent astronomer, but hardly as a

poet—who saw to it that the colleges and other institutions that the incoming Turk inherited from his predecessor should not altogether go to ruin, and that the ravages of invasion should have a chance of being repaired. This man was also the friend of the "Moslem St. Benedict," the mystic Abd-l-Qadr el Gilani of Baghdad, founder of that "Qadriya" order of Dervishes of which all others are offshoots.

During his life, Nizam-l-mulk kept things together, but when he was dismissed by his sovereign and—very shortly after—stabbed by one of the Assassins sent against him by his own old schoolfellow, Hassan Sabbah, all went very speedily to rack and ruin. Malik Shah was the last great Seljuk ruler. Instead of one great Sultan, subordinate only to the Khalif at Baghdad, there were at least a dozen independent rulers. That the Khalif should hardly rule beyond his own palace wall was nothing new, but now there were independent rulers of Syria, Persia, Egypt, Anatolia (the name of Rum borne by that last kingdom shows how the prestige of Rome still lasted), and even petty Kings or Atabegs at places like Mosul and Mardin. Behind or beneath all, and terrorizing all and sundry, were the Assassins, feared from Cairo to Samarkand.

It was this division in the world of Islam that gave their one chance to the Crusades, which were just beginning at this time. Having to face a divided enemy, the invaders from the West were able to establish themselves in Palestine, and were able to hold it for just so long as those divisions lasted. As

soon as a great man had established his own undivided power over the part of the Mahommedan world that was in question, the fall of the Crusading kingdom was only a question of a few years. Had Saladin been less great than he was, or had the leaders of the Crusading kingdom avoided some of the more glaring of their own blunders, the result would have been the same, though it might have been postponed for a little time. As things were, it came speedily.

One of these divisions of what was in theory the one and indivisible empire of the Khalifate has a special interest for the historian of the Assyrian Church and nation, for it is no other than the kingdom of Prester John, so great in mediæval legend. We have seen that in the days of the Sassanids, the Church of the Assyrians had extended east in the lands of Tartary, and that it had its bishops in such centres as Merv, Tus, Herat, and other places in Khorassan as early as the year A.D. 430. These bishoprics were no ephemeral growth, for they are regularly referred to, and appear in councils, either personally or by deputy, until the year 1000. Life was not too easy, and at times it was found to be difficult to gather the three Bishops who by universal custom are needed for the consecration of a colleague in case of vacancy. The counsel of the Patriarch was sought, and it was held that, on an emergency, two could consecrate, the book of the Gospels being held over the head of the Ordinand, to represent either the third, or more probably the Divine Head of the Church Himself. Out in that

wild land there were nomad chiefs and princes who were Christian, and we have seen that at one time, the sub-king of the principality of Tarez, in Balkh on the Oxus, was of that faith. In the year 1001, John, Metropolitan of Merv, reported the conversion of another, and apparently a more important one. He was head of the Kerit or Kerait tribe, and was converted to Christianity by a vision of a saint whom he believed to be "Mar Sergius," a favourite object of Assyrian devotion, who to this day is great at healing the sick and at succouring distressed travellers. If things go very wrong with you on a journey, you may vow a black lamb to Mar Sergius, and all will take a turn for the better; but beware of the vengeance of the Saint if you vow and do not pay. The King, or Khan, was converted, and brought over his tribe with him to Christianity, their numbers being estimated at 200,000. Order was taken for the instruction of these new converts, and some of the problems that they propounded have a strange ring to those who are inclined to identify Christianity with Western civilization, and to consider that the first sign of grace in the "native" is a desire to clothe himself in cast-off European clothes.

The difficulty that beset these Tartar Christians was, first, how it was possible for them, whose sole diet was horse-flesh and mares' milk, to keep a Lent in which total abstinence from everything of an animal nature, such as meat, milk, and cheese, was strictly enjoined? An Assyrian Lent lasts fifty days, and has no break, by custom, on the Sunday.

Then there was the problem of the "Holy Qurbana," the Eucharist. How were they, who never saw bread for years together, and whose only wine was that provided, compulsorily, by their enemies, to find the necessary elements?

How they settled their problems is not quite clear, but it can easily be understood how the story of this Christian prince in the remotest East, as it was repeated and magnified in its passage from mouth to mouth, would strike the imagination of the West. The name of one prince of the house—for the rule of this Christian family lasted for several generations—happened to be "Ung Khan." On Syriac-speaking lips this readily became Yukhanan, which is John, and the holder of the name was somehow credited with the Holy Orders that it is quite possible that he really did receive, and so became "Prester (or Presbyter) John."

Thus poets like Ariosto, and travellers like the famous Sire John de Mandeville, who loved a good story for its own sake, and were not always proof against the temptation to improve one, took up the idea and made of it what we know in mediæval legend of the great prince in "Ethiopia" (or somewhere beyond the limits of the known world, where anything might happen), who ruled an empire of Christians as well as the harpies who tormented him would allow him. Now that Englishmen are in authority somewhere near his land, one may be allowed to dwell on the fact that the hero who saved the Christian King from his tormentors was the English Paladin, Astolpho.

If Western dreamers ascribed to the King a rank and power somewhat beyond the facts, they were hardly to blame, for their most extravagant imaginings hardly went beyond what the potentate was in the habit of ascribing to himself. In one letter he declared himself to be "ruler of seventy kings, having under his dominion a Patriarch, twelve Metropolitans, and twenty Bishops." He was the ruler of "the three Indias, Babylon, and of tribes unnumbered," and he used to keep tame salamanders to produce asbestos.

Actually the rule of this prince lasted till the days of Jenghiz Khan, when that destroyer put an end to him and to his rule, though the Tartar condescended to take his daughter, Yasusin, and put her among his wives.

Meantime the bulk of the Assyrians, so far as one can infer from the absence of any information about them at this period, were living as quietly in Mesopotamia as circumstances would allow. They were still under the Khalif and the Atabeg of Mosul, Zengin.

This man, whose name really means wealthy, but of which the Crusaders made "Sanguineus," "Bloody," was a dangerous foe to the Crusading kingdom of Palestine, and more particularly to its important outpost, the "county" of Edessa. This latter he captured, thereby opening the way for Saladin a couple of generations later; had he had a free hand, he might have conquered Jerusalem himself. He had, however, but little of the zeal for the faith that distinguished the later ruler. He

was intent on creating a principality for himself, with Mosul as its capital.

If he was a dangerous foe to those who happened to get in his way, and not the kindliest of gaolers to Crusaders who fell into his hands, he was not a bad ruler to those who admitted themselves to be his natural subjects and paid him the tribute due.

Meantime another Christian nationality had developed in an interesting way. In the general hurly-burly of Oriental affairs, the Armenians, suppressed in their own kingdom, found means to start another. This stock, if it was already "not very much beloved of its neighbours," at least showed the qualities of persistence and endurance.

In the days when the Bagratid kingdom of Armenia was at its greatest, it had established some sort of claim over the mountain districts of Cilicia, in the neighbourhood of Scanderoon and the north-eastern corner of the Mediterranean, though the Armenians were never (for their misfortune) able to get actually down to salt water and become masters of a port. This hilly country was not over-run by the Turkish horsemen, and formed a refuge for some of the cadets of the Bagratid house, their leader being one Prince Rupen or Reuben.

He and his son Constantine were welcomed by the highlanders, who were an old fighting stock, and had in former days provided the best troops of the Byzantine army, having this great merit from the administrator's point of view, that they were admirable in the field and never formidable in revolt. They were not big enough to be dangerous,

politically. They had, however, an intense attachment to their old independence, and accepted the old royal house as the standard and embodiment of it.

Soon political events were to make these mountaineers really important. The Crusaders came, and these warlike and native Christians not only supplied most welcome recruits to the dwindling army of Godfrey de Bouillon, but made the siege of Antioch a possibility by furnishing supplies to the besiegers. Historians do not always raise the question, how the great Crusading army was able to feed itself during the eight months that the leaguer lasted, and Armenians do not get their due credit either for the fact that they made the first and greatest of the Crusades into a success, or for the fighting qualities that they then showed, and have shown later, when a reasonable opportunity was given them.

The Armenian barons—their leader had not yet taken the title of King—were most trusty allies to the Crusading kingdom, as were another little "heretical" people, the Maronites of the Lebanon mountain.

If the Crusaders were glad to find such efficient native allies, the two Christian peoples were, of course, glad to welcome such helpers and rescuers as the Franks, and the alliance continued for as long as the Crusades lasted. The Armenians fought side by side with the knights of the Temple and the Hospital—and sometimes against one or other of them, in the various internal quarrels of the stormy

little kingdom—and they had their alliances and disputes with Bohemund of Antioch. One Templar adventurer, Melior, wished to abandon his vows and be their king. Their most natural ally, however, was the House of Lusignan, which had acquired the kingdom of Cyprus from Richard Cœur de Lion, after he had happened to capture it, in characteristically casual fashion, on his way out to the Holy Land. The two families of Lusignan and Bagrad intermarried again and again, and the Armenian Lion is still properly a quartering of the Cyprian shield.

The Baron, or Prince, of Cilicia, became a king in the course of the struggle. He and his people gave valuable help to another of the Crusading armies, that of Frederick Barbarossa, when it was on its march through Anatolia, and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire gave in his gratitude a crown to his ally. The Emperor of Constantinople, hearing of this, sent another. Constantinople had, naturally, ancient rights over the whole land, and indeed the original idea of the Crusades was, in the first place, the recovery for the Christian empire of the provinces that it had lost to the "infidel." Of course that notion very soon slipped out of the mind of the Crusaders, who conquered and held—while they could hold—for their own hands. The Comneni had not forgotten, however, and did not propose to allow their claim over Armenia to lapse altogether. The Armenian King kept both crowns, and then got his own Catholicos or Archbishop to anoint him King, so it

is to be hoped that everybody was satisfied. We believe that both of these crowns have been preserved, and form a part of the treasure kept in hope of better days in the treasury of the Armenian Patriarchate at Jerusalem. If so, they must surely be the oldest royal diadems now existing and none can have survived stranger vicissitudes.

The question of the "Catholicos" of Armenia—the title is practically equivalent to Patriarch, but the Armenians regard it as superior to it—raises the question of the Armenian Church. The original Catholicos of that body had ruled at Ejmiadzin, in "Old Armenia," and rules there still. While the Armenian kingdom lasted, a branch of the nation had set up as independent, with a King at Van, who had his own Catholicos at Akhtamar, now merely titular. There were thus two Catholici in the Church of the nation, and now a third was added to them. The new King had to have his own, and established him at Sis in Cilicia, where he still continues to rule, or at least did so continue, till the disasters of the Great War.

The fact of the Crusades, with their establishment of a Latin Kingdom in Jerusalem, brought both of these Churches, Armenian and Maronite, into immediate connection with the Latin Church, and with the Pope. Both stood accused of heresy: the Armenian—as stated above—of Monophysitism; the Maronite of a modification of the same error, which was enough to keep them apart from others. They were "Monothelites," teaching—or said to teach—that the human nature of Christ was so far

unlike that of other men that it had no human will. This doctrine had been put forward by the Emperor Heraclius in the seventh century, in the hope that "Monophysites" and "Orthodox" might be able to agree on that compromise and unite. The only result of the well-meant overture had been to increase by one more the already manifold divisions of Christendom, and to give to one more nation, albeit a very small one, a peg on which they could hang the banner that should proclaim their difference from the Greek.

Now came the question: what were to be their relations with the Latin, with whom they had hitherto had no quarrel, and with the Pope, whose claims to universal allegiance were only in process of formulation at the time of their separation from the "Orthodox," and which had not, up to that time, come above their ecclesiastical horizon?

The matter was not unimportant, for on it depended, not only the question whether Armenians and Maronites would or would not be dependable allies of the Latins, but also the whole problem of the future relations of the Papal Church with those of the East.

Thus it was a question which is very much alive still, in our own day. The Pope—or Papacy, for it was the institution that was concerned and not any one holder of it—was perfectly ready to grant very liberal terms to either Oriental Church. Given a certain acknowledgment of his supremacy—and that might be made very vague—he was quite prepared to recognize the Hierarchy and rites of

the non-Latin body, and to allow that they might continue as what a later age was to call a "Uniate" Church. Uniates are defined by a Roman Catholic writer as "Orientales uniti Sanctae Sedi," but—as that writer would readily admit—there is nothing in the word to limit its application to Orientals, though, as a matter of fact, all Uniates do happen to be Easterns. Were certain aspirations to take form, and the Pope to recognize an English Hierarchy with an English rite, that body would be also an "Uniate" Church.

At first, nothing but an indefinite submission to the Papacy, and some sort of doctrinal explanation —varying with the Church concerned—was asked of these Uniates; but as time went on, Papal prerogatives and doctrines that were open questions in the Middle Ages were more strictly defined, and there was always a tendency on the part of some Latins to draw the leading-strings tighter, and of some Orientals to act, *mutatis mutandis*, exactly as we see others acting now, and to imitate Roman ways for their own sake, and their devotional value. So the independence of Uniates, once very considerable, is apt to be a diminishing quantity.

The motive of the Pope in making these concessions—for so they were regarded—to the Orientals was partly political, partly ecclesiastical. He, viewing things from a distance, was able to take a sound and statesmanlike view of the problems of the Palestine kingdom, which the authorities on the spot, whether in Church or State, were by no means always able to do. He was able to see that

the loyal friendship of the Christians of the land was simply "articulus stantis aut cadentis regni," in this case. "Franks" could not colonize Palestine and hold it against the weight of the Saracen invader. The "poulain," the European or "mixed blood" born in the land, was a byword among all nationalities and faiths. The European could at best provide the leaders, lay or ecclesiastical. The populace must be native-born. Further, the Pope knew, though there were many "Latinizing zealots" who did not know it, that these Oriental rites and hierarchies were as ancient and as fine as ever the Latin one, and that they had the same right to exist in the Church. Thus he was quite prepared to recognize them, and not to insist on a more pronounced acknowledgment of the Papal supremacy than he felt to be implied in his oath, taken at his enthronement, "to preserve and increase the prerogatives of the Roman See."

Of the two Churches concerned at the moment, the Maronite frankly accepted Papal supremacy, and being the first to submit, were given higher privileges than any other after them. Hence the members of this Church have always remained what they became then, sincere, not to say sometimes fanatical, adherents of the Papacy.

With the Armenians it was different. They were a larger body, with more independence to keep, and at once less need of Frank protection, and less certainty of getting what they needed, for they were more exposed to attack. Further, the whole Maronite body was in the Lebanon, and it was one

military question whether the Crusaders could protect them or no. Only a part of the Armenian race was now included in the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia; a majority of it was "'rayah' to the Turk" over in old Armenia, and it could not possibly get any political benefit, and might incur real political danger, from too much friendliness with the Frank.

It will be readily understood that those who could get nothing by the sacrifice of the independence that all prized were even less eager to make that sacrifice than those who did stand to gain something!

Further, both parties had their inconvenient zealots. There were Armenians who were certain that they, and they only of the sons of men, had preserved the Faith of the Church in its purity. Their assured future reward for that fidelity, and the inspiriting thought of the Gehenna that awaited not only their oppressors, but also every other brand of Christian, were their consolation for what they had to endure now. Hence, even to explain what they held, far more to submit to even the faintest shadow of a foreign jurisdiction, was to give up the faith of their fathers, and such apostasy was anathema.

On the other side there were Latins to whom, as to some to-day, Latin or Roman and Catholic were interchangeable terms. The Latin rite and customs, and all that they were themselves accustomed to, were so very clearly the most suitable universally, that it was a mere duty to enforce them on everybody, and only wilful ignorance or criminal obstinacy could explain the attachment that those

inferior creatures, the Easterns, felt for their obviously inferior rite. Latins have no monopoly of this very human feeling. We have known cases where good English Missionaries felt that only wilful obscurantism on the part of Orientals could explain their preferring the Liturgy of St. James to the simple and scriptural worship of the Book of Common Prayer.

The authorities on both sides, however, were more reasonable, and the Catholicos of Sis assented to some sort of uncertain agreement with, and submission to, the Papal Church. The exact terms were not defined too closely, and this uncertain agreement, entered into by the Cilician part of the Armenian Church only, and by them merely for the sake of political help, lasted for just so long as that political help could be maintained. That was not very long, for the day of the Crusades was over when the thirteenth century began, though spasmodic and heroic efforts were made to prolong it. Jerusalem had been lost in 1189, and though that strange figure, the agnostic Crusader Frederick II, recovered it for a decade in 1229, it was lost again and finally in 1244. Saint Louis could not recover it, and the year 1268 saw the loss of all prospect of political support to the Armenians, when Antioch was taken by the Bulgarian Bibars, the man who had risen from the rank of a slave to that of Sultan of Egypt. The fall of Acre a little later meant that the last shadow of a Crusading kingdom was gone, and shortly afterwards the Armenian kingdom went down under Islam. The last holder of the title

appears for a moment at the court of the King of England, when a "King of Armenia," pensioner of the King of Castile and by his grace feudal lord of the city of Madrid, appears before Richard II to beg him to follow the example of his great namesake, and take the way of the Crusade.

It was about the year 1340 when the Armenian kingdom came to an end whilst the Seljuk dynasty —by then relatively civilized—was still ruling in Iconium. Their heirs, however, had already appeared on the scene. They were still fighting Constantinople when the Ottoman Turk arrived. At first a tribe of insignificant size, the chief of which was given a territory by the Sultan of Iconium for good service rendered by his four hundred horsemen on a battlefield, their ruling family yet produced for generation after generation such a series of great men as perhaps no other dynasty has done, and under those chiefs the little clan rose to the unquestioned headship of the Turkish stock. Their founder had dreamed once of a belt that stretched across Asia and Europe, with its jewelled buckle at Constantinople, and his sons were to make that vision good. In due course we shall see how that Oriental power was to come from the West, and to rule the Assyrians in Mesopotamia.

CHAPTER VI

THE MONGOLS

THE Seljuk invasion was no doubt bad enough for the unfortunate people who were exposed to it, but actually it was but the first of a series, and though all the invaders were of one type, the last were worse than the first. Naturally, they did not all follow the same track. It was hardly worth while for a plunderer to go, at least for a generation, where Alp Arslan and his men had preceded him.

Still, if the Seljuk horde were Tartars, they had acquired at least a semblance and tincture of civilization. The same could hardly be said of those who followed them, Jenghis Khan and Timur, whom our fathers knew as Cambuscan and Tamburlaine, and for deliverance from whom Eastern Europe prayed, putting them in the same category as Plague, Famine, and other irresistible "acts of God."

These latter waves of Tartar invaders, when they arrived, were the merest savages. Washing was an unknown ritual, and the compulsory ablutions that followed on conversion to Islam must have had certain undeniable advantages. They seemed hardly human—certainly well below what men of the period had learned to think of as man—but at

the same time vastly more formidable than other men.

There was no denying that they were splendid soldiers. It was not merely that their hereditary tactics—those of the Parthian horse-archer—were formidable in themselves. Every blow has its parry, and good generals like Richard Cœur de Lion had thought out an effective answer to this mode of attack. The Tartar, and the Turk who is his heir, has the instinct of discipline born in him. He is a soldier by instinct, following and obeying his chief, and dying in the cause in which he is ordered to march, indifferent altogether as to whether he shall die from the sword of the enemy or through the mismanagement of his leaders. A jovial and kindly ruffian, who loves playing with Armenian babies when he is allowed to, and only bayonets them when he is told to do so.

When the strange instinct of migration suddenly turned this formidable enemy upon the civilization of Mesopotamia, fate gave the invader a leader of genius. Jenghiz Khan, the "Cambuscan" of Chaucer, was one of the great warriors of history, whose instinctive strategy is studied and admired by students of military history to-day. More than that, he, the mere savage nomad, took the pains to learn the use of, and to apply, the best military science of his day. It was the only thing in civilization that he cared for, but that he did take and use. In that, too, he resembles his Turkish descendant, who is as indifferent as man can be to science and art, but is always ready to take up, and use, the

latest methods of scientific destruction. He did not invent artillery, but it was he who taught Europe the power of it on the battlefield.

Jenghiz Khan, whose original name was Temuchin, was born as the son of a petty and unimportant chief in the year 1162. By the power of his own personality, and the attraction of his victories, he drew all the Tartar race to himself, and before his forty-fifth year was recognized by the whole nation as the "Great Chief" and "Perfect Warrior." The latter is the translation of the name by which he is known in history, Jenghiz. The Tartars had begun to migrate, and were willing enough to take one who had already won their thorough approval as a general in the big invasions that they contemplated; under the leading of Jenghiz, the migrating swarms went out both to East and to West.

The easterly movement, though it resulted in the overrunning and subjection of the whole Chinese Empire, hardly concerns us. That more important for our purposes is the one over the lands where the kingdom of Persia was now beginning to organize itself in a new form, under the rule of a Shah, Ala-ud-din Mahommed, who was nominally subordinate to the fainéant Khalif of Baghdad. Here, about the year 1220, or just when England was winning her great Charter, and under the personal orders of Jenghiz, there was such an orgy of destruction as that land, already old in war and its horrors, had never seen before. The Persian army sustained one great defeat in the field, and

then took itself to the defence of the fortified towns, only to find that the Khan, a scientific warrior as well as a tribal leader, was irresistible there also. One great city after another went down before him: Bokhara, Samarkand, Nishapur, Merv, Herat; and as each was taken it was destroyed, and the whole of the inhabitants massacred.

One city was wiped out to avenge the death of a grandson of the Khan, and destroyed so thoroughly that its very site was forgotten by a later age, though the memory of the awful act survived. A land which had hitherto been populous was reduced to a desert, even more thoroughly than had been the case when the Seljuks descended on Anatolia. Pyramids of skulls marked the path of the conqueror, and at times one would be made from those of men, one of women, one of children. A contemporary writer, who had every opportunity of accurate information, declared that not one-thousandth part of the population was left, and later writers agree that it had never reached, and probably never would reach, one-tenth of what it had been. A land that depends on irrigation for its cultivation does not recover too readily from such a blow.

What made the act more fearful was the fact that religious fanaticism had nothing to do with it.

There is something honourable, however awful, about the act of the man who destroys because he feels that in so doing, it is the will of the power he reveres that he is executing. Jenghiz and his Tartars destroyed for destruction's own sake, and it was his

boast that corn could never grow where his horse had set his hoof.

The Persians, normally a good fighting stock, seem to have been paralysed by the onslaught, as men sometmes are in the face of a flood or earthquake, or some other catastrophe of nature. This seemed to be as much beyond their power to check as that. One man only stood up to the Tartar, and that was Jelal-ud-Din, a cadet of the royal house. He, though a paladin personally, does not seem to have been either a general or an organizer. He was defeated in one battle after another, and at last had to swim for his life across the Oxus to escape from his conqueror. "Let him go," said Jenghiz as he watched the swimmer; "he may come back and show us more sport." Actually that did not come to pass. The prince escaped to India, whence he never returned.

For twenty-one years this series of great raids and destructions went on, with short intervals for rest and gathering together of forces for fresh attacks. At last, in the year 1227, Jenghiz died, worn out with victory. He died as Khakhan, or Khan of Khans, and was buried in his "Urdu," after the fashion of a Tartar chief. The word, of which "horde" is a corruption, means no more than camp, and the dialect of the Mongol "camp" has become a language in India, while the word itself is modern Turkish for an army corps. The "Urdu" started on the march, convoying the corpse of their Khakhan. Every man whom they met on the road was killed, either to hide the place

of burial or, more probably, to send the great departed into the next world with due attendance. He was buried in a huge mound, and "forty maidens and innumerable horses" were slaughtered at the tomb, in order that Jenghiz Khan might have all the perfect warrior needed in the place whither he had gone. The actual site of his sepulchre, like that of Alaric, was kept a secret by his men.

Still Jenghiz had not started the movement that he had wielded so terribly, and it did not cease with his death. The Tartars were still on trek, and their migrations continued under the great man's sons, Ogdai, Jagatai, and Tule.

Of these, Ogdai was the Khakhan, and the Empire was theoretically divided between the three of them; generally, such an arrangement gives hope that the invaders will quarrel over the spoil, and that the civilized land which is threatened will be given at the least a respite, but the terrible Tartar was an exception to that law as to all others. The instinct of discipline, that was to make his Ottoman kinsfolk so irresistible in Mediæval or Renaissance Europe, seems to have kept the brothers acting together, added perhaps to the fact that there was so much to divide that there was no excuse for jealousy. They turned first to the East, and by the year 1234, seven years after the death of Jenghiz, China had been subdued; the "Kin," or "Golden" dynasty, had ended in blood, and the kingdom of Korea had also been overrun. Then the floods were directed to the West, and the armies of the Tartar went out in two new directions. Anatolia,

where the Seljuk was now ruling, was left alone; but the invader came down on Mesopotamia to the south of the Kurdish mountains, and swept also into Russia, to the north of the Black Sea. In the former direction, Erbil, Mosul, Diarbekr, were stormed one after the other, and the horsemen—keeping still to the plain, and shunning the hill country—passed on even to Aleppo, and sacked that city also. The army which went to the north-west entered what we now call "Trans-Caucasia," captured Kars and Tiflis by the way, passed the Caucasus at its western end, and so poured over Southern Russia and Hungary. Kieff, Cracow, Buda-Pesth, were taken one after the other, and finding in Russia a good land, that suited their nomad habits, they settled in it, and ruled it for some two hundred years.

In 1241 the Khakhan Ogdai died—men said of the drink that Tartars were prone to indulge in—and signs began to show that the flood had reached its apex, and would soon begin to decline. There might, of course, be new great waves of destruction —there was in fact to be one of specially awful character—but for all that the storm was passing.

Kuyuk, son of Ogdai, was recognized as Khakhan, and it was soon seen that he "was much inclined to Christianity." Not only were his doctors Christians—that was almost a matter of course, as soon as the savage began to require a doctor at all—but his ministers were Christians, members of the Assyrian or Nestorian Church. That is to say, the captains of the conquering horde had begun to

feel the need of somebody who could administer the great empire that they had overrun, but which as yet they could not rule themselves, and they turned to those who had done all the work of administration under the Arab, calling upon them to supply the skilled civil service as they had done before. It was a devastated empire and one with a terribly diminished population that they had to organize, but it had to be done for every one's sake, and only the members of the old civil service under the Arabs could do it.

The Tartar thus began to desire at least the externals of civilization, and the fact showed itself in his habits. Hitherto he had been a mere tent-dweller, setting up his encampment wherever he happened to be, and ready to take it down and move on when the whim took him, or when new pasture was needed for his herds of horses. Now, the tent, while still remaining one, becomes at least a semi-permanent encampment. It has a wall round it, with gardens and golden fountains, and shows in fact all the signs of a gradual development into a palace. Visitors describe the tent "which from a distance would appear to be a castle, so immensely broad and high is it," and speak of the wonderful embroidered cloths—spoil of Persian cities no doubt—that had taken the place of the old "black hair" or felt rugs of their fathers. A tent-church, with a roof of silk, showed the respect of the Mongol for the uses of his Christian subjects.

While thus becoming civilized, it is natural that the Tartar, like the Goth in like case, should begin

to tend towards the religion of the land that he had conquered. His own faith was very primitive paganism, of "Shamanist" variety, with a certain tincture of Buddhism. The ceremonies observed at the funeral of the Khakhan, however, do not suggest that the influence of that last faith had gone very deeply into the mind of the Tartar.

There were two main religions in the land which the Tartar had won, namely Islam and Christianity. For a time the stock wavered and hesitated as to which of the two they should choose: Islam was the faith of their enemies, whom they had just overcome; the Nestorians accepted them as their masters, and were useful servants; for a time there seemed to be a real possibility that the Tartar stock would accept Christianity as its national faith, even as the Gothic race had done elsewhere, and as several Tartar tribes had done in the past.

Meantime Christian rulers in the west of Europe began to be aware of the mighty power that had arisen out beyond the land of their enemies the Saracens, and even to think of it as a possible ally against Islam. Jerusalem had been lost, sacked by those Kharesmians whom the Tartar drove before him, but the Crusading kingdom of Palestine had not altogether ceased to exist, for in the year 1250, Antioch was a Christian principality, and the cross still waved over Acre; a ring of castles round it, like Athlit, Margat, and Belvoir, kept the "infidel" away from their walls. Thus there was still touch between Europe and the East, and good political reason for knowing what was going on there.

Shrewd minds began to think of the Great Khan, who was at least the foe of their foes, and had wrought far more damage to those foes than any Crusader could ever dream of doing, as a possible friend to themselves; and in the Council of Lyons held in 1274 it was decided to send ambassadors to him. Other ambassadors however had gone before that, the first of them being brothers of the Order of St. Francis, the Christian adventurers *par excellence* of those days. John of Carpini, the man chosen, received friendly and honourable treatment from the Khakhan Kuyuk, though it is possible that it was the reception that an Oriental ruler will generally give to a dervish or any other religious enthusiast, rather than what an ambassador would expect. The next comer, Dom Anselm of the Dominican Order, did bring forward some diplomatic proposals, but they do not seem to have penetrated far into the intelligence of the Tartar. "Go back, and tell your master the Pope to come and kiss the earth before me, and then we will talk," was the answer that he was bidden to take back to Rome.

In 1253 another and more famous ambassador came, in the person of the Friar Rubruquis, messenger of St. Louis of France, who was for ever yearning for the recovery of the Sepulchre of Christ, and could speak to the Khakhan as king to king, in a way that it was hardly possible for the Pope to do. Another King who had a personal interest of another sort in the question, Hayton of Armenia, associated himself with the embassy,

and the good Friar was given a series of audiences of the Khakhan—by then, Mangu—and resided for some time in the "Urdu" of the King.

Here he was much impressed by the Nestorian Bishop Sergius, whom he met. He wrote a full account of his experiences the while, from which we have drawn much of what is told above, but he found it quite impossible to effect anything. At the last he came away, reporting regretfully to St. Louis that the Khakhan seemed to be most amiable in intention, but that it was really impossible to make any binding or satisfactory alliance with a potentate who was usually more than half drunk, and who unfortunately did not remember, when he was sober, the benevolent schemes he had formed or approved when he was intoxicated.

The Khakhan being thus impossible, people turned their attention to the "Ilkhans," or princes of the blood royal, who were recognized as rulers of certain of the tribes of the nation, and therefore (as the tribes had now become more or less settled) as provincial governors in lands where some of them—as at Bokhara, for example—founded lasting kingdoms. The Emperor of Constantinople, Manuel Palæologus, was one of those who took up this line of policy. He proposed to give a daughter of the House to wife to this barbarian, and surely such an honour as that would bind him in alliance fast and sure. However, when the time for action arrived, the lady was no more than an illegitimate child of the Emperor, a sufficient honour for a Tartar. The Lady Maria Palæologus was thus sent to

the East to become one of the wives of the Ilkhan Hulagu, nephew of the Khakhan, and ruler in Persia and Northern Iraq; on arrival, it was found that Hulagu was dead, but the treaty went forward notwithstanding, and Maria—who was either indifferent in the matter, or perhaps was not consulted—became the bride of Abaga his son. On the whole, it was probably a better bargain for her.

Before that date, however, Hulagu, the Ilkhan of Persia, was the effective ruler of the Tartar clans, and he had led them against the Mahommedans of Persia in a final and most terrible attack. At first, indeed, he had been content—at the bidding of his uncle, Mangu—to turn his arms on the "Assassins," and so rid the whole Oriental world of a menace and a nuisance. The "Children of the Sheikh-el-jebal" were formidable enough as murderers (Mangu found their dagger on his pillow when he threatened them with war), but as enemies in the open field were contemptible, and Hulagu had no difficulty in crushing them and capturing their stronghold of Alamut in the mountains to the south of the Caspian. It was immediately after that event, in the year 1256, that Hulagu led the Tartars against Baghdad and Mesopotamia proper. The Capital of the Khalifs, which till then had never seen an enemy, put up a very feeble defence. It was stormed, and there followed such a sack and massacre as shocked the not very sensitive conscience of an age which had seen the Tartar invasions in the East, and the Crusade against the Albigenses in the West. For a month, as some say, for a week at

least, there was free license to plunder and kill, in a town where all the treasures of the world of Islam had been collecting for the last five centuries. "Such looting and slaughter and torture as I dare not speak of, even generally. Things befel that I dare not mention, therefore imagine what you will." [Kitab al Fakhri.] It was a catastrophe from which Moslem culture never recovered.

The Khalif, Mustasim Billah, was killed somehow in the general massacre, but in a way that avoided the scandal of the shedding of royal blood. To a Tartar, to shed the blood of a noble—save presumably in battle—was an insult, and men of family who had offended the Khakhan were paid the compliment of being hanged, or strangled in some other way; a method of execution that survived in the "bow-string" in Constantinople.

With a king or prince, the obligation to avoid the sacrilege was of course doubled, and Marco Polo tells how, in his day, a prince who had committed treason was sewn up in two carpets and "shaken to death"! One account says that the Khalif of Islam met his end in that extraordinary fashion; another, that he was shut up in the treasury with the gold he had refused to spend on measures of defence, and starved.

Hulagu's army swept on to Aleppo and Damascus, which was stormed in its turn, and it is interesting to find that the general who commanded in this invasion was a Christian of the Assyrian Church, by name Khitboga. Under his advice, Hulagu meditated an advance on Jerusalem, and the return

of the Holy City, after it had been captured, to the Christians who still ruled at Acre, and who had indeed held Jerusalem itself only twelve years before. Ceded to the Emperor Frederick II (the Stupor Mundi) by the descendant of Saladin, Malik-el-kamil, in 1229, it had been held under treaty for those fifteen years before falling back to the rule of the Moslem in 1244, to remain there till the days of the Great War.

It would have been a most picturesque episode if an Assyrian general, a Christian in the service of a Tartar Khakhan, had given back Jerusalem to the Crusaders, but it was not to be. Islam had found a champion once more, and a worthy successor of Saladin; this was the Mameluke Bibars, the Bulgarian who had begun life as the slave of a cross-bow-man—he gloried in his surname of "Bunduk-dari" all his days—and who ended it as Sultan of Egypt. He had already captured Jerusalem, when the Crusaders who held it were rash enough to abandon the "neutralized" status that Frederick's treaty gave them, and to enter into an alliance with the Sultan of Damascus against him of Egypt.

Now, when the Tartar army under Khitboga advanced against him, Bibars defeated it in one of the hundred and one battles that have been fought on the Plain of Jezreel round about Megiddo, captured Damascus, and then resolved to be done for ever with the nuisance of a Frankish kingdom in Palestine, and to wipe out Crusading rule in Antioch and Acre. The former place he took; the

arrival of opportune reinforcements at Acre, under the leadership of Prince Edward of England, deterred him from making an open attack on the latter, and Edward had at least the satisfaction of securing for the remnant of the Crusading kingdom some twenty years more of life.

The flood of Tartar conquest had now reached its high-water mark, and the tide began to turn. There was no prospect now of recovering Damascus, or of molesting the Mameluke Sultans in Syria, though later Khans might toy with the idea, as we shall see. Mangu the Khakhan died soon after these events, the slaughter of 20,000 human beings at his funeral showing that the Mongol was still almost completely the Barbarian. Hulagu, wearied of battles and of slaughter, settled down as a "retired conqueror" at Maragha. Here he built himself a sumptuous tomb (it was the one form of permanent abode the Tartar could conceive of), and occupied his leisure in the study of astronomy, and the society of his favourite wife, the Assyrian lady Dokuz Khanim.

Kublai Khan became Khakhan, recognized as such by the "Kuriltai," which was the gathering of the nobles of all the clans. He was content to rule in China, and to leave the "Ilkhans" of the House, Abaga and Arghun, in practical independence in Mesopotamia. The rule of the Khans was now a recognized thing, from the Pacific as far west as Syria, over practically the whole of Asia and European Russia, and there was peace over that area. It was, however, the peace of utter exhaustion

among what had been the agricultural and commercial classes of the continent, and of satiety among the Tartars, who had now raged and ravaged for two whole generations, and who for the moment —though only for the moment—had had enough of plunder and slaughter. Marco Polo, who was just about then setting out on his travels from Venice, was amazed at the tranquillity and order he encountered, in that he—when armed with his "byuruldu," or imperial passport inscribed on the golden tablet—passed from end to end of the land, and found the roads "*sicurissimi*." Later travellers have had an experience of the sort in Ottoman dominions, and have drawn much the same conclusion as the worthy Venetian,—that because he could go safe, with his special protection, therefore there was no peril for ordinary travellers.

Further, if life was now safe in the empire of the Tartar, it was also on a far lower level than it had been before he came. Whole provinces of what had been cultivated land, carrying a great number of inhabitants, were now a desert. Great cities were now mere wastes, the population was about one-tenth of what it had been, and everything was on a vastly lower level.

The conditions of life in the countries concerned make such a disaster possible. In Mesopotamia, for instance, the whole land had once been a richly cultivated garden, where the great irrigation works, the result of some five thousand years of intelligent labour and garnered experience, had harnessed the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates, and had kept

those turbulent rivers in the service of man. Now all that went to pieces. There was not, so far as we know, very much deliberate destruction, though there certainly was in the days of Timur. With the appalling destruction of life and the lack of hands to work, the result of the great invasions, there was not the labour available for the task—an enormous and recurrent one, and one requiring local knowledge and intelligent direction—of keeping the "bunds" of the rivers in order and repair. They were allowed to go to ruin, and then the rivers, once let loose, finished the work of destruction. It must be remembered that both rivers, for the whole length of the delta from Baghdad to the sea, run above the level of the surrounding plain, on a "levee" that they themselves have made of the mud that they deposit on the course to which they have been confined by the "bunds" erected by human labour.

Let the waters be let loose to flow where they will, and much of the country is reduced to the swamp which it was before historic time began, and man started his work in the land. What is not swamp, in that rainless land, becomes parched desert at once. An infinitesimal difference in level, imperceptible to the eye on that great plain, may make the difference; a distance of a few yards only may take you from swamp to Sahara, both being equally useless to the cultivator. Mesopotamia is like Egypt; a land where human energy and human foresight can do so much to harness nature, that man is readily spurred, by seeing the result of his

labour, to produce civilization. One thing only is needed: the ægis of any government that will protect, and secure to the common man the power to reap where he has sown. Let that elementary right be denied by authority—and from the days of Hulagu to our own it has been denied—and the land goes back speedily and completely to the condition it was in before human effort was brought to bear upon it. It is for our age to undo the results of six centuries of injustice and neglect and—as modern power would enable us to do, were it applied intelligently—to restore what fifty centuries of human effort built up.

Here, then, is the great fact that we have to grasp if we are to understand the history of the Assyrians and the nations that surround them: that in the thirteenth century, that wonderful age of precocious development in the West, civilization went back and down in the East, and that all over Persia and Mesopotamia, what ages had built up was destroyed by the Tartar flood. Those lands have never recovered since. In this time of desolation the Assyrian "millet" did not suffer more than others. That is to say, persecution was not directed particularly at it by the Tartar conqueror, by whom indeed the Assyrians seem to have been rather favoured than otherwise. But, in the general massacres that reduced the whole population by nine-tenths, they suffered as others did, and in the general decline of civilization, and the lowering of the level of life at large, they went down too.

It is this that accounts for what is otherwise a

puzzling fact,—the disappearance, over so much of the territory that it once had occupied, of the whole Assyrian or Nestorian Church, so that it today, even if all of the modern divisions into which it had split be counted together, is no more than a miserable remnant of what it once was.

Still, the Church survived, and the Christian "millet" of educated men continued to be a useful element in the body politic that the Tartars were beginning to build up out of their wild tribes. Hence, the latter part of the thirteenth century saw one of the most picturesque episodes in the long history of the body. The Mongols at large were still undecided in religion. They were officially Shamanist, so far as they were officially anything, and were still inclined to look favourably on Christianity, of the two religions with which they were in contact, if only for the reason that the Moslem rulers of Syria and Egypt were their political enemies. Hence, Christian powers in the far West could still dream of their conversion, and Mongols could still hope for a useful alliance with Kings who had, in days not long past, shown themselves able to invade and conquer the territory of these Moslem foes of theirs.

The Council of Lyons had actually contemplated such an alliance in the year 1274, as we have seen, and hopes ran so high that personal letters were exchanged between the various rulers. Our own Edward I, having just returned from his Crusading adventure, writes to the "Ilkhan" Abaga of Mesopotamia, rejoicing in the prospect now open, that that ruler will turn the enemies of Christianity out

of the Holy Land, and restore it, maybe, to the dominion of the Cross. So soon as ever the Pope has settled the date of the next Crusade—and he expects that information almost daily—Edward of England will write again to Abaga, and tell him when he may expect the arrival of the King of England in the Holy Land.

Nothing came of the dream, but the project was not forgotten in the East any more than in the West, and fourteen years later Argun, successor of Abaga, took up the idea afresh. He was friendly to Christianity, and one of his sons, Khodabendeh Oljaitu, had been baptized by the name of Nicholas. He, too, had dreams of doing what Hulagu had attempted, and of pushing his dominion to the Mediterranean, and he hoped for the help of the Christian powers of the West in the design. His letters to St. Louis of France, in Tartar, and in most remarkable Latin, still lie in the national archives of Paris. Hence, he decided to send an ambassador to see if anything could be done, and as a Christian ambassador was obviously the best for the purpose, and he had plenty of Christian subjects, one of them, and by preference the head of the "millet," seemed the most suitable. The Ilkhan, therefore, summoned the Patriarch of the Church, Yahb-Alaha III, and gave him as strange and vague a mission as ever was given to man. He was to go generally to the West, and discover the Christian nations known to exist there, and make alliance with them in his master's name. The missionary was as strange as the mission, for the Patriarch Yahb-Alaha (his name is the

Syriac equivalent of Theodore) was a Chinaman *pur sang*. Pekin born, but of an old Christian family which looked back to the days of the Si-an monument, he was at once Chinese gentleman and Christian Archbishop.

To make a bishop of a Chinaman now is regarded as a most doubtful and perilous experiment, but this fact reminds us that there were days when an Oriental Church could develop the powers of the Oriental and use them for Christianity without making bad copies of the Western out of their converts.

Yahb-Alaha, however, was unable to go for reasons of health, but his kinsman and secretary, the Archdeacon Soma, was sent in his room; he was of the same family and history as his Patriarch, whose school-fellow he had been. He started on the journey, and achieved it safely by the route of Acre—which was still in Christian hands—and in the course of the autumn of 1289 he arrived in Rome.

There was, at the moment, no Pope for the ambassador to see. Honorius IV was dead, and one of the long vacancies common at the time was in process. Soma was, however, received by the Cardinals, and seldom can a body of respectable ecclesiastics have been more astonished than were Their Eminences collectively, when this Chinaman arrived from somewhere about the limits of the world, announcing himself as the ambassador of a potentate of whom they had but vague knowledge, and as a dignitary of a Church of which they do not appear to have heard at all. "Who are you and where do you come from?" demanded the Cardinals.

"How do you hold the faith? As our Lord the Pope holds it, or otherwise? How was it that your nation received Christianity?" The Chinaman's answer must have been as startling to ordinary Roman notions as was his appearance, for it was soon clear that if the Cardinals had never heard of his Patriarch, he on his part had never heard of their Pope! "Never came there a man from the Pope to us Easterns. The holy Apostles taught our fathers, and as they gave us the faith, so we hold it to this day." Soma was asked for his confession of the Christian faith, and he gave that which is in use among his people to this day: "Christ in two Natures, two 'qnumi' and one Person."

This is not counted as satisfactory by the authorities of the Roman Church to-day, but the Cardinals of the thirteenth century—better versed in the theological questions of that century than of the fifth and sixth—passed it as satisfactory without challenge, and allowed their visitor to celebrate Mass according to his own Oriental rite in at least one of the churches of Rome, perhaps even in the Basilica of St. Peter itself. Actually, one suspects that the Cardinals could not all have been as completely ignorant of the very existence of the Nestorian Church as Soma thought that they were. His own immediate host, John of Ascoli, the Cardinal of Praeneste, was superior-general of the Franciscan Order, and must have had some knowledge of the mission of Rubruquis and his predecessors. Still, men "on the General Staff" of the Church are sometimes specialists in their knowledge, and with

little experience of what is not in their department, and this modern phenomenon may have had some thirteenth-century precedent.

Soma could get nothing done at Rome; the papacy was vacant as stated, and there seemed to be no immediate prospect of any election. The Cardinals suggested that he should go on to present his letters of embassage to the various Kings of Christendom, and return to Rome with their answers and opinions on the policy that he had come to suggest. The wanderer therefore continued his travels, had an interview with the King of France at Paris, and even with Edward of England, somewhere in that King's dominions.

Edward was still as enthusiastic a Crusader as he had been in the days of his youth, when he brought back from Jerusalem to Westminster the stone within which his bones still lie. He assured his visitor that nothing was so near to his heart as the hope that he might be able to take the Cross once more, and win back the Tomb of Christ for Christendom: if only those Welsh and Scots would know what was good for them, there might be some chance of his performing his vow. But, as he wrote on another occasion, "Terra Christiana guerris multipliciter turbata."

Here, too, Soma was received as one who was beyond all doubt a Catholic priest, and Edward asked him to celebrate the mysteries before his court, and the King himself received the Elements from his hands. One would willingly believe that this service took place under the newly built arches

of Westminster, and picture this Chinaman "offering the Holy Qurbana, according to the rite of the Apostles, Mar Adai and Mar Mari," in our English shrine; unfortunately, it seems that there is little doubt that the interview took place in Gascony, and in some unknown church in the land of France.

Back once more in Rome, Soma was received with every courtesy by the newly elected Pope, no other than his old host the Cardinal of Praeneste, now known as Nicholas IV. But, while considerable interest was taken in him and his Church, his political mission was a failure confessed. The day of the Crusades was done, and authorities in Church and State alike had abused that cause so sadly, that it had no longer the power to move the hearts of men. Polite letters were sent from the Pope to Mar Yahb-Alaha, who sent an equally courteous reply, which included what might be interpreted as a recognition of Papal supremacy. A few Franciscan friars were sent to instruct the clergy of the Church of which the Pope had now official knowledge, but the Mission does not seem to have endured for long.

A few years more, and the opportunity for the winning of the Mongol had manifestly passed. In 1291 the city of Acre fell, and the last shadow of the kingdom of the Crusaders was gone for ever. In the same year, or soon after it, Argun, the friendly Ilkhan, died, and Ghazan his son accepted the religion of Islam. This example was soon followed by the great mass of his Tartar kinsfolk, including the men of the "Golden Horde," the most important of the collection of tribes.

So passed what we may describe as the greatest "might-have-been" in the history of the Church. The Mongol or Turkish stock had been willing for a couple of generations to accept Christianity and not Islam as their national faith, at least one prince of the House of Jenghiz being actually baptized, and had it been presented to them by the Oriental representatives of an undivided Christianity, there is little doubt that they would have done so. If this had happened, what might not have followed?

That the Mongol was a barbarian and a destroyer is a fact that we have not disguised. He was so, to the same extent as were our own Viking ancestors; but he had, like his Turkish descendant, the military virtues of discipline and loyalty to the fullest extent. The purely military virtues are not the only Christian graces, but they form no bad foundation on which the others can be built, and if the Viking stock could develop, under the influence of Christianity, into Norman chivalry and Norman intellect, what might not the splendid Turkish stock have risen to, had it accepted a form of religion of a kind to stimulate its good qualities, instead of the Islam which kept those good qualities stagnant, while stimulating and fostering all that made for evil in the national character? The Turkish race, which is the Mongol, was to rule in all the East and in half of Europe. Acceptance of the Christianity to which they were then inclined might have made their rule a blessing to those lands, instead of the curse that it has admittedly and universally become.

CHAPTER VII

TAMERLANE, AND THE COMING OF THE OTTOMAN

A SERIES of small rulers followed on the great Khans of the thirteenth century; one of those series of smaller men in whom Nature seems to take her revenge, or secure her own compensation, for the coming of a number of those kings who are of greater mould. There was no great conqueror among them, and it would seem that the Empire only continued to exist because of the reverence that the Turanian stock instinctively has for a house that has shown itself to be worthy of rule. Such loyalty as kept the House of Osman on the throne for generations after it had ceased to produce great men, seems to have done the same work for the House of Jenghiz. Their Christian subjects were left in peace, and able to do something to bring about the recovery of the land from the wastage of three generations of war, though it was never to be brought to the level from which those wanton wasters had thrown it down. There were outbreaks of petty and local persecution, and there was a massacre, perhaps not altogether unprovoked, at Arbela. These troubles embittered the life of the Patriarch, Yahb-Alaha, but there was nothing very sweeping to complain of. On the other hand, the

fact that the Tartar rulers had now accepted Islam as their faith lowered the whole position of the Christians very seriously. While the Mongols were pagan, they accepted the Christian races as their equals, and in a sense their comrades, if they would take the position; we have seen how at least one of the generals of Hulagu Khan was a Christian, and was thought none the worse of on that account. When they had become Moslem, they put the Christian as a matter of course into the position of a "rayah" under the law of Islam, and that position under the still uncivilized Tartar was far worse for the weakened and diminished body than it had come to be under the civilized Arab.

Meantime the Armenians had gone down altogether. Their country was now off the map, and her people "rayah," subject, that is, to the Mahommedan, though to the Turkish rulers of Anatolia, not to the Khans of Persia and Northern Mesopotamia. Those Turkish rulers were Seljuk at the beginning of the century, but before the end of it the Ottomans had taken their place, and, ruling at Brusa, were already casting their eyes across the narrow straits into Europe.[1] It is true that a few of the Armenian tribes, descendants of the old Isaurian mountaineers, had still retained a shadow of freedom in the Cilician mountains. The Turk had not had the energy to force his way into those hills, and he left the hill-men in what the Ottoman administrators of a later day called the "Ashiret" or tribal status, under their own head-men, and not

[1] Osman attacked the Knights of Rhodes as early as 1315.

subject to the feudal seigneurs who then represented the Sultan's authority in the plains. It was not till the twentieth century, and the days of the Great War, that this last token of the lost independence of the people was to pass away at last.

But the fourteenth century was not to close without the last spasm of the Mongol migrations or invasions, and the appearance of the last and greatest of the adventurer-conquerors of that age and stock, Tamerlane. Timur the Tartar, "the Iron Man who was lame" (for that is the meaning of his real name Timur-lenk, which is softened down by Western writers), came more into contact with Europe than did some of them, and for that reason has impressed himself on European literature more than they. He was hardly greater than Jenghiz, and could not possibly have been more utterly merciless, but as he came after him and had no successor—fortunately for the world—the acts of previous conquerors are in a measure credited to him, and he stands as a sort of personification of the whole series in which he was no more than one.

If not greater than Jenghiz, the man who first welded the Mongol race into the conquering instrument that it was, he succeeded to his position and improved upon it. Indeed one can hardly overrate the rank, as conqueror, of a man who in the course of one not very long reign, captured and plundered such centres as Baghdad, Damascus, Smyrna, Moscow and Delhi. Nor did he only plunder them. He embodied them in his empire and ruled them for his life, so that even when he

was manifestly failing and blind there was no question of rebellion against him, and all were ready to follow him to the conquest of the one land above his horizon that did not own his sway—the Empire of China.

All this, too, was done in twenty-four strenuous years. Though born in the year 1335, Timur did not begin his great conquests till he was forty-five, the same age as Jenghiz, we may note. Of course, his actual fighting does not commence then; that had started with him when he was of the age of twelve, and he is said to have gained his surname in his very first skirmish, the result of a wound in the foot that he brought back from an unsuccessful sheep-raid. Nor (with all due respect to the shade of Marlowe) was that the only wound that he ever received.

Timur was one of those kings who have to make their own kingdoms. By birth he was the son a petty "Agha" or local Emir, of the Barlas tribe of Turks on the River Oxus. He clearly was a most wonderful general and leader of men—however appalling a phenomenon he may be in himself—if during nearly three score years of active and never-ending war, he could raise himself to be the ruler of "three parts of the world" as known to him, without having suffered any serious defeat, or even check. He first had to rally his own kinsfolk to follow him (which he did, according to the contemporary story, by distributing among them all that he owned save only his horse and his sword), and then he started on the series of campaigns, at

first comparatively unimportant, afterwards as great and more widely spread than those of his example Jenghiz.

All that had been done to repair the ravages of previous generations, in the century that had elapsed since the last great raids, was now undone by Timur, who repeated the boast of Jenghiz, that where his horse trod the grass should never grow. He was as destructive as a tornado, and entirely devoid of conscience, saving perhaps that, as a rigid Moslem, he was rather more merciless to Christians than to those of his own faith. Even when Christians submitted to him, he destroyed all their churches, and often did not spare their lives. Yet the rule had its exceptions; Timur could at times behave even worse to Mahommedans than to others. They were good Moslems who surrendered to him at Sivas, on his promise to "shed no drop of blood." On the strength of the wording of that promise, he held himself free to bury all the men of the town alive, before he proceeded to sack the place and destroy all trace of building.

It was his own fellow-countrymen, Tartars of the "Ak Kuyunlu" or "White Sheep" clan, whom he massacred to the number of sixty thousand, building their skulls into the towers that served as landmarks by which the members of the embassy sent him by the King of Castile could find their way across the plain. One year, he swept down on Baghdad, plundering the whole city on its surrender, even though it was still the abiding-place of the nominal Commander of the Faithful and successor of the Prophet. In

his sack of the place, any soldier was counted disgraced who did not bring at least one head to swell the pile of skulls that Timur raised. He it is who is credited with the complete and final destruction of the great irrigating systems that fertilized the whole delta, but we question whether much of them remained in working order after his predecessors had passed. Let the protecting care of the working engineer be withdrawn and in that land the rivers will themselves do all the destructive work that is needed far more thoroughly than any human destroyer. In another campaign, the province of Adiabene—the Mosul-Erbil district—was practically depopulated. This was to a great extent a Christian province at the time, having been the stronghold of the Assyrian Church since the days of Mar Adai. Now it was swept with the besom of destruction, and its surviving people driven (according to their own tradition) up to the mountains of Hakkiari, the gorges of which were to remain their home until the twentieth century and the Great War swept them even out of that refuge. Nisibis, a great city still, was reduced to the wretched village that the traveller sees now, where carved Roman columns stand in front of mud-built hovels, to bear witness to the present inhabitants of the great men who were there before them.

Other wars followed. One took him as far as India, though even Timur found his tribesmen hesitate at the thought of invading the land of so great a ruler as him of Hind, and "the Amir" had to proclaim the invasion a Jehad, and call on the

zeal of all true believers, before he could get his followers to come out to yet another victory (one of the many won on the blood-soaked plain of Panipat), and to the sack of imperial Delhi. Then he turned even against his own kinsfolk and co-religionists, the Turks of Anatolia, and gave the Christian empire of Constantinople an undesigned respite from its destined doom. He struck down the Sultan Bayazid in the battle of Angora (a victory on which Henry IV of England wrote to congratulate him), and passing right down to the Ægean Sea, drove the Knights of St. John from their stronghold in the castle of Smyrna. Here Timur used the siege engines that the Tartar always carried on campaign, and the fortress had already become untenable when the Grand Master brought the galleys of the Order from Rhodes into the harbour; then the Knights, sallying out from the castle, fought their way shoulder to shoulder down to the quay and safety for themselves. It were, perhaps, better not to inquire into the fate of the inhabitants of the place, for Timur had hung out the black flag, the sign that meant "give no quarter." It was an earlier edition of what was to happen there in the twentieth century, when once more the Turanian from the interior fell upon the Greek of the coast. Certainly Timur's own words were true: "When I clothed myself in the robe of empire, I shut my eyes to safety, and to the repose that is found upon the bed of ease. I vanquished kingdoms and empires, and I established the glory of my name." Three golden globes (like the famous "palle" of

the Medici, but with a very different interpretation) formed the "arms" upon his seal, in token of the three quarters of the world that he ruled. He vowed that if he lived, the fourth should yet be added to them. "There is but one God in heaven, there should be but one ruler upon earth."

Though destructive enough in all conscience, Timur would not have allowed that he was a mere destroyer. In fact, in his day, the Tartars were getting beyond the nomad stage in which only the tomb was a permanent abiding place, and were beginning to settle down. Timur had his favourite cities, which were in a measure his capitals, Samarkand and Bokhara, and from his own point of view, if he destroyed other places, it was to beautify these. In each city destroyed the artisans who escaped being butchered in the inevitable sack were collected and transported—if they did not die upon the journey—to one of these two cities, that their skill might serve to make them worthy of so great an emperor.

There he built splendid mosques, which remain to this day to show that the great destroyer had his dreams of being a great builder too, and he even erected a splendid palace for himself. It is true that, though he built it, he hardly entered it. His camp was his true home, and there his tent-palace, more marvellous than that which had excited the wonder of the Friar Rubruquis, seemed almost incredible—even when he saw it—to the Spanish ambassador Clavijo. The palace that he built, he vowed that he would not enter for seven years, till

he should have fully avenged himself on some of his enemies, and when the seven years were out, it was almost time for the great conqueror to seek his only permanent home. So at last he rested in the tomb that he had built for himself at Samarkand under a tombstone as barbaric and magnificent as the man himself—a single eight-foot block of jade.

Life in the days of Timur was, as one might expect from his position, a compound of luxury and barbarism. He and all his court ate from dishes of solid gold (this may have been a convenient way of storing the royal treasure), but the dishes were put on the deer-skins that still form the ordinary table set before the traveller in Kurdistan, which were dragged into place before the guests. Further, when "the Amir" wished to do honour to a favoured guest, such as an ambassador from the King of Spain, these dishes would be filled with the favourite dish of Timur and his court —horses' tripe, in balls about as large as a man's fist, of which the hapless Europeans were expected to eat enormously. It was a mere matter of courtesy and obligation to get drunk on the Amir's wine, which was served with an abundance that shows that not all the precepts of Islam were held in honour, and it was felt to be a special favour when this was not insisted on with one guest of queasy digestion.

Yet, as a Moslem, Timur favoured learning as a true believer should, and at least one of his great colleges is a splendid monument at Samarkand to this day. Whether he had any learning himself does

not appear, for in the day of our informant's visit his sight had failed him, and he was certainly unable to read then; he had, however, a great love, if not for literature, at least for good conversation, as well as for a game of chess, at which he was a master. He is not the only great general who has found relaxation there. A smart repartee—of the right sort—delighted him: "I have ravaged all the world to adorn Samarkand and Bokhara," he said to Hafiz once, "and you say" (quoting a line of the poet's) "that you would give them both for the mole on a pretty girl's cheek."

"Prince," said the poor poet, "it's that prodigality of mine that puts me destitute at your footstool"; and Timur burst out laughing and gave him a good pension.

The Amir—it is the name by which he is still known in his capital—died in the year 1404, when in his seventieth year. It was no great age when we remember that Barbarossa the Pirate remained hale for twenty years longer than that, but sixty years of campaigning had worn even the terrible Tartar's frame out, and when the Spaniard Clavijo saw him, he was manifestly a dying man. He had torn down everything that was in his reach, including even the Mongol reverence for the House of the Great Khan, and it remained to be seen whether those who came after Timur could wear his diadem.

It was soon obvious that they could not. No man could hold the empire of Timur; kingdoms he had destroyed for the moment, like that of the Ottoman Turk, rose as soon as he was gone, and weaker

princes, either of his blood or in fiefs of his supposed granting, divided up the lands that he had ruled. Turkoman Beys, of the "Black Sheep" or the "White"—for it would seem that the clan had not been so completely destroyed by Timur as he had thought—ruled at Van and Tabriz respectively, and the Amir in the latter place showed that he had inherited at least some of Timur's tastes by building one wonderful monument that still exists, in ruin: the famous "Blue Mosque."

At least one chief of Timur's blood had much of greatness in him: Baber, the petty ruler of Ferghana. When he found that his little kingdom would have none of him, this "king-errant" wandered off to India, there to be the founder of a "Moghul" or "Mongol" empire that was to last in name till 1857, and to produce some of the greatest princes and builders that the world has known. In Timur's own empire, however, the strange persistence of the Persian stock in the lands that have belonged to that race since the days of Cyrus was to be shown once more, for the old race of Iran was now to come to its own again. Twice they had gone down, as we have seen, before the Greek and Parthian in days before Christ, and before the Arab. In each case they had been held in subjection for centuries, and now this second time they rose again.

This time, it is true, it was not in the strength of that Zoroastrian religion which supported them during their former subjection. Islam had destroyed it finally, at least in its own land. If the Persian, however, had been forced to accept the faith of

Mahommed, at least he would mould it after his own national liking, and it was as Shiahs that the Persians rose again. That "sectarianism"—it is the meaning of the word—might express itself in many forms, some of which are very remote indeed from orthodox Islam. It is even held now that the Devil-worship of the Yezidi of to-day is only a rather extreme form of this "dissent."

The form fashionable in Persia was not so wild as that; it demanded the greatest reverence for the person of Ali, the nephew of the Prophet, and taught that he was unduly excluded from his rightful inheritance, the Khalifate, by those abandoned usurpers, Abu-Bekr, Omar and Othman. This new form of the old Persian "right divine" was enough to give a focus to Persian national feeling, when it was embodied in the chief of a small tribe of the old blood from the Baku district, the leader of which could claim some sort of lineal descent from Ali. Thus it was that Shah Ismail was able to revive the shattered Persian nation, and establish it, if not in its empire, at least in the lands that were its original home. This leader soon put down the Beys, whether of the Black Sheep or the White, who manifestly could not hold Timur's sceptre, and was able for a moment to conquer the land of Mesopotamia, where the ancient shrine of the Shiahs had already his reverence at Kerbela. He added another to them in the very neighbourhood of Baghdad, in the twin domes of Kadhimain.

But, though the Persians had secured the land of their fathers, it was not written that they were also

to win back the old empire. There was soon a new force in the land, which was to rule it for the next four centuries: an Oriental and Turanian who was to enter it from the West—the Ottoman Turk. We have seen them hitherto simply as a small tribe, the Amir of which happened to do good service to the Seljuk Sultan, and which had risen to the leadership of that and other stocks in Anatolia. Then, thanks mainly to the fact of their production of a most amazing series of great leaders (there is probably no royal house that has produced such an unbroken series of great men, generation after generation, as did that of Osman), they had become the Sultans, not only of Anatolia, but of Constantinople, and most of the Balkans. Now they were turning to the East and South, under the most terrible of that line of great men, Sultan Selim the Grim.

Selim was a fanatical Sunni Mahommedan. He had massacred all the Shiahs in his land on whom he could lay hands, and he wanted no better excuse than the prevalence of that form of "dissent" in Persia to make him declare war on the ruler of that land also. Hence, in the year 1514, his invasion began, and the Persian armies were utterly defeated in a great battle near Khoi in Northern Persia. Kurdistan and Northern Mesopotamia (the districts of Diarbekr and Mosul, that is) were annexed by the Sultan, and the whole existence of the new Persian kingdom was imperilled.

Fortunately, Selim found other work to do. He turned aside to invade Egypt, where the fact of conquest enabled him to proclaim himself the Khalif

of Islam, and when that was done he decided that the annexation of the island of Rhodes—then held by the Knights of St. John—was a necessity for the safety of his new empire.

This enterprise, however, was not to be lightly undertaken, and the terrible Selim, tyrant and poet, died before he had accomplished it, thus giving a much needed respite to Persia. Selim had doubled the area of his empire, and had raised it—by the assumption of the Khalifate—to an unquestioned supremacy among Mahommedan kingdoms. He had so ruled that in his day a Moslem could wish his enemy nothing worse, than that he should become the Vizir of the Sultan; and ere he died, he wrote his own epitaph in the following words:

> I have read life's riddle, emptied its nine pitchers to the end.
> Never shall I, Sultan Selim, find on earth a faithful friend.

It was for his successor, Sulieman the Magnificent, to finish his task by the capture of Rhodes in 1522, and the addition of Baghdad to the Empire in the year 1534. Then, however, it was done. Mesopotamia passed to the Turk, and remained in his possession—though not quite unbrokenly so—until the twentieth century.

The period of the later Mongol Khans, 1350–1550, is almost a blank in the history of the Assyrian "millet" and Church. We know that, after the sack of Baghdad by Hulagu, the seat of the Patriarchate shifted, and the prelate had his residence, at first actually in the "Urdu" of the conqueror, and later, when the Khakhan was beginning to have something like a settled residence, at Maragha on

Lake Urmi. A few years more, and it is settled in Mosul. In this period of confusion, the Church had fallen on evil days indeed. In whole districts where there had once been prosperous Bishoprics, there were no Christians left, and hardly any Moslems. Of the twenty-five Archbishoprics or Metropolitans that once were proud to pay allegiance to the "Holder of the Throne of Mar Adai," only five remained, and of these one, the Metropolitan of Malabar in India, was cut off from all communication with his Patriarch. This was owing to political developments there.

The Portuguese, who were naturally staunch followers of the Pope, had come to rule in Goa and other parts of South India, and they had, of course with the highest motives, thought it their obvious duty to lead or force these Christians whom they found in the country they controlled into direct obedience to the Holy Father. The readiest way of doing this—as they had absolute command of the sea—was to prevent the sending of Bishops to the heretical Patriarch to receive consecration, that so the supply of priests might be cut off, and the lay-folk forced to submit to Latin jurisdiction. There was apparently no thought, then, of allowing converts what would now be called "Uniate" terms.

For a time the scheme succeeded, and some sort of submission was extorted from those Indian Christians who felt themselves to be severed from their original head. Presently, however, the Portuguese flank was turned by a measure that they had not thought it necessary to guard against. The

native Church, finding it could not get Bishops from the Nestorian or Assyrian Patriarch, applied to the Monophysite instead. That prelate (the titular holder of the Patriarchate of Antioch) resided then at the city of Mardin, and the Portuguese, knowing that the heresy that he stood accused of was precisely of the opposite complexion to that of which the Nestorians were held guilty, had never thought that there was any danger from him. In point of fact, however, the heresy, whatever its theological colour, had come to be no more than a badge of independence of the foreigner; and if these Indians could secure that, they were quite willing to be accommodating in other respects. So the Malabar Church, hitherto an outlying Archbishopric of the Nestorian Church, became one of the Monophysite communion, and as such it still survives, with a life that is, maybe, more picturesque than quite canonical, but very real all the same.

With this exception, however, all the outlying provinces of the Church and nationality were utterly lost. An embattled church perished, as completely as the Church of Northern Africa in an earlier age.

It was not, it would seem, apostasy or direct persecution of the Christian faith as such that brought about the catastrophe. It would seem to have been rather the wiping out of the whole population of the lands in which it had spread. The destruction was not the result of any special hostility felt by the Tartars to Christianity, for, with the possible exception of Timur, they do not seem to have felt any. It was hostility to civilization at

large, and the pure instinct of destruction, that impelled them.

Still, the destruction was not altogether complete; in fact, considerable relics remained, in lands that had been the original home of the Church, and also in others that were to be their refuge for some centuries to come. Timur's massacres did not quite wipe out the Church from the province of Adiabene, and also, those who had sought for refuge in the mountains of Hakkiari—where it would seem certain that there were already some Christians—made a home there from which it was not easy for them to be shifted. Others in the northern provinces of Persia by Lake Urmi were also undisturbed, so that the Church, though sadly diminished, still maintained its life. More than three-quarters of it were lost for ever, but what was left was still able to play a part in the religious life of the East.

Unfortunately, the disaster that was big enough in itself was made even worse by division in the body. Quarrelsomeness and the spirit of schism are always the bane of Oriental Christians, and the more needful circumstances make union to be, the more likely is a serious division.

It was inevitable that the period of utter political anarchy which had begun with the Mongol invasions should have been a period of confusion for the Church. During that 250 years a system had grown up which was past all defence on any orderly theory of ecclesiastical government, and can only be excused, like much else in other communities which have been less severely tried, by political and historical circumstances.

The office of the Patriarch had come to be, not indeed strictly hereditary, but practically confined to members of one family. The custom had not yet, seemingly, extended to Bishops in general, but it certainly did so before very long. The idea of hereditary family sanctity is quite congruous to the minds of all types and religions in the land.

Under this custom, the Patriarch selected his own successor, almost as soon as he had been consecrated himself, and that successor was usually his own nephew. This designated heir to the office was known as the "Natar Cursya," or Guardian of the Throne, and the system is known familiarly in the "millet" by that name. Naturally, the Natar Cursya could not be the Bishop's son, for by then all holders of that rank were celibates, and had been so for ages. This was, however, a matter of custom, not of canon. Barsoma had, as mentioned above (see p. 55), secured the passing of a law that Bishops might marry, and though his council had been annulled, that particular canon had been re-enacted, and up to the sixth century there were cases of married Bishops and Patriarchs in the Church. Universal feeling in favour of celibacy, at least in the higher ranks of the hierarchy, and the example of saintly Patriarchs like Mar Aba, then brought about a change of custom, so that now Bishops do not marry though priests and deacons are allowed to do so freely.

The law, rather oddly, seems to have remained unchanged. Thus, when the various canons of the councils of the Church were brought together and

codified, about the year 1300, and the result published in the book of the "Sunhadus" (i.e. Synodus), which is still the manual of the Canon Law of the "millet," Abd-Ishu of Nisibis, its compiler, could find no canon to forbid episcopal marriage, and he passed over the point in discreet silence. The Bishop of course knows nothing of any canon allowing so completely extra-legal a custom as the "natar-cursya system," and indeed he includes several rules that forbid it by plain implication.

Thus it was that when the Patriarch Shimun bar Mama died in the year 1552, his nephew, Shimun Dinkha, claimed the succession as of right. There were many in the Church, however, who did not acquiesce in his claim, either because they objected to the man himself, or from a quite reasonable dislike of the semi-hereditary system. They soon found a leader in the Abbot Sulaka, head of the monastery of Rabban Hormizd near Alkosh, in the province of Mosul, and an open dispute began. Shimun Dinkha, however, had this controversial advantage, that while his opponents demanded a canonical election and consecration, things had in fact slipped into such a condition that neither of these was possible. By the canons, dating back to the fifth century, a Patriarch must be elected and consecrated by five particular Metropolitan Archbishops, those of Bait Lapat, Maishan, Erbil, Nisibis and Kirkuk. Further, the Bishop of Kashkar, and he only, had the right to act as *locum tenens* during the vacancy. At the date, three of

those six sees had ceased to exist altogether, and the other three were vacant. There was only one man "in Metropolitan's orders" (Assyrians divide the three orders of the Church Universal each into three other grades, the "episcopal orders" being Bishop, Metropolitan, and Patriarch), and that one was the Shimun Dinkha who claimed the Patriarchate. Sulaka, his rival, may have had more popular support, for it seems certain that the men of the plain (Mosul, Erbil, and Nisibis) supported him, while the mountaineers were behind Shimun Dinkha. A unanimous agreement and a reformation of the system was clearly what was needed, but that was quite impossible with Orientals who were already involved in a personal dispute. Shimun Dinkha assumed the Patriarchate, and as "Natar Cursya" had had no difficulty in getting possession of the heirlooms and records of the see, while Sulaka appealed to the Pope for help.

This was an entirely new thing in the history of the Church. We have seen how, in early days, while the Papacy was still in process of development, Rome was entirely beyond the horizon of this Eastern Church. Even in mediæval times, though there had been courtesies as we have seen, and expressions used on which the Pope could base a claim to obedience in the future, there had been no real submission. Yahb-Alaha had used courteous language as noted above. One of his predecessors, Sabr-Ishu V, had spoken of the Pope as "Summus Pontifex" and "Pater universalis," and of himself as "sub ejus obedientia," while begging him to

absolve the Emperor Frederick II. Formal submission, and an appeal to the Pope to give judgment in a dispute, was an absolutely new development historically for the Church of the Easterns, and as completely against its own canons as the "natar cursya system" itself.

Of course the Pope could do nothing else but use to the full the opportunity of establishing what he regarded as the indefeasible rights of his see. Sulaka was made to sign a most comprehensive document of submission, and of doctrinal orthodoxy. That done, he was recognized as Patriarch of the East readily enough, and was given the pallium and full patriarchal jurisdiction in Oriental lands, with the significant permission that, if he should have the misfortune to fall among thieves, he might make a new pallium for himself. Further, his successors were not to be obliged to make the wearisome journey to Rome for consecration. It would be enough if, locally consecrated, they sent letters of obedience to the Pope.

Sulaka returned to Mesopotamia, where he acted as full Patriarch. He consecrated five Bishops to secure the succession of his own line, and he organized the "Church of the plain districts" on a footing of separation from the "Church of the mountains." Very soon, however, he died. He was arrested by the Pasha of Amida (Diarbekr), and it was said that he died in prison. Men believed that his rival, Shimun Dinkha, had bribed the Turkish official to put his enemy out of the way, and though there is no proof of the accusation, one must admit that

Orientals are only too apt to act in that fashion with a rival; indeed, others besides Orientals have been believed guilty of such an act in that age.

Thereafter, there were two lines of Patriarchs of the East, the "Shimun" line in the mountains, and the "Elia" line in the plain. Both were anxious to secure Roman support, neither was desirous to pay the price of submission to the "claim of the foreigner" if it could be avoided, and each hated the other rather more than he did either Latin or Turk.

Hence their relations, with the Pope, with the Turkish government, and with one another, were, during a period of rather more than one hundred years, extremely tangled and not particularly edifying. Both kept up the "natar cursya" system, protest against which had been the theoretical cause of the schism. At last Innocent XI, seeming to despair of his protegés, established in the year 1680 a third line, that of "Joseph," the holder of which should have his residence at Diarbekr, and about the same time the Dominican Fathers set up, at Mosul, the educational institution which is still a great feature of that town.

Thenceforward, all Orientals who were educated —and education was becoming more and more important in the land—were educated in conscientious and reasoned acceptance of the Roman claims, and that fact soon began to tell. Men were "Latin" in sympathy, from that time on, not because they had a quarrel with their neighbours, but because they had been taught to believe in the

claims of the Pope. Things continued on that basis for another hundred years, and then, in 1778, the Elia line in Mosul made a final and definite submission to the Holy Father. After that, the "Joseph" line at Diarbekr was allowed to lapse—though the last holder of it did not die till 1828—and the Church of the Plain became definitely Papal in its obedience as one of the "Uniate Churches" of the East. In the year 1845 this Uniate body received recognition by the Sublime Porte, as a distinct "millet" of Christian subjects of Turkey, the "Chaldæan nationality." This name, used by Western writers to denote them previously, was in the nature of a new title for the people themselves, though one that they have learned to use since. The state of affairs was now in the condition in which it remained until the outbreak of the Great War. The plains were Uniate, the mountains were independent, so far as religious matters were concerned. Civilly, in the mountains of Kurdistan, there was no law at all. All men of all religions were, in the state of mountain clans, obeying only their local chieftains. The Patriarch of the Assyrian Church had become one of those local chiefs, and, for the time being, one of the greatest in the district of Hakkiari. Christians in the plains of Mesopotamia, and in Persia also, were ordinary "rayahs" of the government of the land, living under what passed for local law.

CHAPTER VIII

UNDER OTTOMAN RULE

WITH the coming of the Turk and the division of the "millet" into Chaldean and "Nestorian" or Assyrian, we get the establishment of conditions that have lasted from the sixteenth century to times immediately before the present day, and that happen to be personally familiar to the writer. Hitherto, we have been dealing with the past, relying on records which, at least so far as the Assyrians themselves are concerned, are as nearly original as any that have been preserved to us; they are moreover illuminated and made intelligible by first-hand knowledge of the descendants of those whom the historians describe. Now, we come to tell of matters of which we have personal knowledge, or which are at any rate exactly parallel to those of which we have personal experience.

When Sulieman had annexed Baghdad and the division of the Church was accomplished, the whole "millet" was confined to the plains of Mesopotamia —and there mostly to the northern portion—the uplands of Persia, and the mountains of Kurdistan. At first, all lived alike, under what were practically feudal conditions. Sulieman and the weaker Sultans who came after him—he is the last of the series of great men of the House of Osman—held the

reins of government very lightly in those distant provinces. Both in mountain and plain the big chiefs were left undisturbed, under a merely theoretical suzerainty. The descendant of the old Atabeg, or the Khan who had carved out a principality for himself under Mongol rule, still continued to rule much as his fathers had done before him. He might be called a "Sanjak Bey" or a "Dere Bey," and if the Sultan happened to come to make war in his district, he might be called on to furnish a certain contingent of light horse for imperial service, with a welcome chance of plunder as his reward. In reality, he held the district in question because his father had held it before him, and if there was serious danger of an invasion, he might well be given the rank of a Pasha and the dignity of one or two horse-tails, lest he should go over to the Persian.

For instance, the House of Abbas, the lineal descendants of the dynasty that held the Khalifate for so long, retained the province and district of Akra in Northern Mesopotamia for centuries after the Khalifate had passed from them, having somehow contrived to hold on to that fragment of power when all else had gone. The family is still not extinct—or was not in the year 1912—and though even that shadow of greatness has now gone from it, it still has in the district the prestige of ancient blood.

Baghdad, always a provincial capital, had more than the shadow of its old independence left to it. Here a Pasha who was set to rule in the name of

the Sultan was able to establish a practical dynasty in the early part of the eighteenth century, even having three regiments of his own Mamelukes at his command, the slaves born in his house and trained to arms. He educated his Georgian slaves to form his civil service, and in due course he gave his daughters to them to wife, and they succeeded in course of nature to the provincial throne. It is true that the troop of Janissaries maintained in Baghdad were the property of the Sultan, as was in theory the artillery also. Yet these satraps of the later empire could indulge in private wars as freely as those of the Achæmenid days, and when one went down in the struggle and had to flee for his life, the Sultan usually found it more convenient to issue a firman (of course, entirely on his own motion), and to transfer the dignity and the Pashalic to the victor in the strife.

This state of things went on till the nineteenth century was well advanced, and provincial independence went so far that the British Consul of that day in Baghdad was quite unaffected by the trifling fact that his country was in a state of war with the Sultan. Indisputably second man in the province, in the residence that still remains in old Baghdad, he was friendly enough with the Pasha, and a war in Europe meant nothing to either of them.

The same held in the northern part of the district, at Mosul. There the ruler was Sulieman Jalili, a slave-born Pasha like others, and like them, loyal enough to the Sultan while left alone, but for practical purposes, independent. The town of Sulie-

manieh in Kurdistan commemorates neither the son of David nor the "law-giving" Sultan, but this slave-born ruler of the country. It was an age of local rulers, and those who had dominion at Jannina in Albania or as the "Khedives" of Egypt were only a little more independent than others, though their rule may have lasted longer. The man who was big enough to have a good park of artillery could put down any small "Agha" and keep him loyal; but there was no telegraph to keep every local official in personal touch with the Sultan, and no railway to send troops fairly easily to distant provinces, so that the big provincial magnate had a free hand.

The status endured till the days of the "Reforming Sultan," Mahmud II, in 1828. That terrible man set himself to "modernize and westernize Turkey," in very much the same way as those who were to come a century after. All who opposed him, as did the conservative and privileged corps of Janissaries, were massacred without mercy. In Baghdad, men were wise enough to see that no isolated resistance was possible; the Mamelukes straightway submitted, and two or three companies of Janissaries were wise enough to be enrolled as regulars (Nizamieh) without a mutiny. It is true that the then Mameluke Pasha, one Daoud, did think of resistance, and went so far as to execute the first messenger sent him from the reforming Sultan. As soon as a force was known to be on the way, however, he submitted, and ended his days twenty years later as an honoured official in the Sultan's service. He died as "Guardian," or chief admin-

istrator, of the great mosque at Mecca: a most lucrative and honourable post.

Still, if this sort of thing could happen where law has sometimes ruled, it is natural that the state of things should be even more picturesque where law has never counted for much. In the desert, the "Wahâbis" (the puritans of Islam, a sect that has become a clan) became an independent Emirate, and raided the cultivated lands at will. It is not always easy to stop this habit of theirs even now, and in 1801 they sacked the shrine of Kerbela, and there was massacre and loot even in the tomb of Hussein. Wahâbis do not approve of pilgrimage, and their attitude to stately places of worship is that of Cromwell's Ironsides.

Up in Kurdistan, Aghas of tribes and local Sheikhs—in Kurdistan the word implied religious as well as secular chieftainship—had never been troubled by law, and there each local family of distinction ruled unchallenged, and all the world was "Ashiret." The word is one that we shall have to employ a good deal, and may be defined as "tribal," subject to the rule of the chief of the clan, and not, like the "rayah," to the ordinary Mahommedan law of the land.

When the bulk of a tribe or clan happened to be Christian, it was also Ashiret, as, for instance, in the district of Hakkiari, where most of the highlanders were of that religion, Nestorians, and Assyrian by blood. Outside of that district, the Christian villagers in the mountain districts were subject to the Mahommedan chiefs, serf-members

of the clan, as Mahommedan villages in the Christian districts might be to the Christian chief. Jewish villages (see p. 6) suffered from both parties: they might be raided by the Christians out of respect to Good Friday, and ducked by Kurds in honour of some Moslem festival.

There was something analogous to this in our own Highlands. The MacColl clan, there, was "rayah" to that of Stewart, the MacBeths to that of Murray; in Kurdistan, however, though the principle was the same, the conditions of servitude were made much harder by the relations of Christianity and Islam. Sometimes, too, the Christians might find themselves under the rule of a family that had once been of their faith, and had abjured it in order to keep their right of rule. The tale is still told of a Christian chief of the Jebel Tur district, who happened to be in Mosul and visited the barber. That good Mahommedan was willing enough to shave any customer, but bade the Christian wait till the believing heads had been dealt with. The Chief, unaccustomed to wait upon any man, immediately abjured the religion that made him take the status of an inferior. It was a general rule that none was so oppressive as the renegade. Generally, it may be said that the condition of Kurdistan in the period we deal with is best understood by comparison with the tale of our own Highlands, it being understood that the strife between Christianity and Islam accentuates all the worst features of what would otherwise be a most interesting position.

ASSYRIAN MOUNTAIN VILLAGE
(Oramar Hakkiari.)

All the Christian Ashiret tribes were subject to their Patriarch, who had now become a great mountain chief, and indeed was recognized, even by Mahommedans, as having some sort of honorary precedence in all Kurdistan. When the Mosul plain was definitely lost, the "Shimun line" of the two contending claimants to the Patriarchate retired to the mountains, where the hill-men were ready enough to follow him. The mere fact that such inferior beings as the lowlanders had accepted another chief would be enough to make them inclined to follow him, just as often enough it is to be suspected that the real reason why one tribe was passionately Christian was because those unspeakable creatures over the hill were Mahommedan or vice versa. Analogous differences in Scotland have ere now determined whether a clan shall be Romanist, Episcopalian, or Presbyterian.

The Shimun line, in their retirement from the plains, carried with them what may be described as the Palladium of the Patriarchate, the ancient relics that had come down from their fathers, and had always been in the keeping of the "Holder of the throne of Mar Adai." These were a "Firman," written in blue on white silk or linen, and popularly called the "Kerchief of the Prophet." It was a grant of immunity and protection, said to have been written either by, or at the order of, the Prophet Mahommed himself, and recognizing the authority of the holder of it as Patriarch of the Assyrian "millet." There was too a certain sacred knife, also believed to be his gift; if any member of the Patri-

archal House should slaughter an animal with that knife, its meat was considered "halal" (clean for eating purposes) for the strictest follower of Islam. Another relic was a "snake-stone," the gift in unknown days of some traveller of the race to his Patriarch. Put upon the spot that a snake had bitten, the pumice-like substance would suck the venom out, and the man would recover. Whatever the substance, or the method of healing, cure did most certainly follow the application.

With these tokens of his right, the Patriarch settled in the little mountain village of Qudshanis or Kochanes, where he was recognized by the Sultan as Lord of the village, and as at least tributary chief of his mountain clans. The other Christian Bishops of the district readily recognized his right to rule, and the organized life of the Church went on in a style that was picturesque and irregular, but very real.

The "natar cursya" system was speedily extended to all Bishops in the mountains, if it had not prevailed already, as might have been expected. Given mountaineers in the tribal stage of development, who were also most fanatical Christians, and it can readily be understood that the Episcopate was far too important a part of the life of the clan to be allowed out of the family of the Chief. The system would not have grown up had it not been suited to the condition and ideas of the people, and the defence of it, made to the writer by a Patriarch of later days, is worth the quoting: "Of course, we know that the custom is in the teeth of the canons,

but it works fairly, and can you, who know our people, suggest one that will work better? Nomination by the Pope is good for Romanists, but to that we will not submit. Election by the Faithful may be primitive, but with us would mean a battle each time, for our tribes do their voting with cartridges! Nomination by a Christian King of England works with you, but here would mean that any rascal who had done a specially dirty job for a Turkish governor would ask for a Bishopric as reward—and would get it! So we have drifted into a system that gives as fair a chance of a good Bishop as you have of a good King." The writer —an Anglican—was left with no reply ready. Certainly the system works in a strange way at times, as any system is apt to do. A Bishop in his early 'teens, vowed to life-long celibacy, is an unusual phenomenon, and there have been instances (as elsewhere) of one falling under the temptations of youth; occasions have arisen when the father of the Bishop—or even of the Patriarch—might recognize the spiritual authority of his episcopal son in theory, but enforce his parental rights most drastically in practice—even with a thick stick on occasion! No system works ideally at all times! That this one should grow up, in a land accustomed to hereditary religious chieftainship—Sheikhs of the Kurds—is no wise unnatural.

Thus, these Christians lived in the wildest mountains of Asia. Among the Kurds, they were tribes among the other tribes, and all were equally lawless judged by the standard of civilized men, though for

all that they each had a code of their own. By admission of the Kurds themselves, the Christian stock were better fighters than they, and though numbers were on the Mahommedan side, yet so long as armament was reasonably equal, the Christians had little to fear. No general Kurdish confederacy could be formed against them, for that was not the Kurdish way; it was only necessary that the Christians should hold together against a common danger. Unfortunately, the Assyrians being just as quarrelsome as of old, union was the very thing most difficult to secure, and when feuds arose between tribes in the mountains, they were apt to follow the line of religious cleavage, though the quarrel might not be in the least religious in itself.

Thus, in the year 1847, disaster fell upon them. Bedru Khan Beg, the "Mira," or Amir, of the mountain district of Bohtan, was a Mahommedan fanatic, and as such he was naturally inclined to abominate the continued existence, in a land of the Faithful, of these independent and armed Christians. What right had the dogs to exist, save as "rayahs" to the true believer—as Christians ought to be? Thus he was able to gather a confederacy for a "Holy War against the Infidel," and in those lands a pretext for beginning hostilities is never hard to find.

Had the Christians held together, they might have been able to resist his attack, though in that case it is doubtful whether other Mahommedans in the land would have endured the sight of a great Mahommedan chief defeated by Christians. As it

was, each clan hoped to save itself by remaining neutral while others were destroyed, and each of the Christian Ashiret districts was ravaged individually, from end to end. There were fearful massacres, and in one case a number of some 2,000 Christians, who had held out as long as their food lasted in a mountain stronghold, and then surrendered on solemn promise of quarter, were all hurled over the tremendous precipice that had guarded one side of their place of refuge. The Patriarchal House itself escaped, in spite of special efforts made by the enemy to "extirpate that nest of serpents," but its residence was destroyed, and all its treasures lost, including the "Firman of the Prophet" which called on all true believers to honour him whom the Prophet had called friend.

In due course the flood passed, as such floods do in the East. The Kurd did not want to destroy all Christians—for who would then cultivate the land?—and the Turkish government, spurred into unwilling action by the British Ambassador at Constantinople, saw at last that it might make its profit out of the business. It had allowed the Christian tribes to be massacred, and their traditional independence was now broken. Now they were not unwilling to please the troublesome Briton (it was Stratford Canning, who was a hard man to quiet when he was once roused to action) by preventing the Kurd who had done the mischief from becoming inconveniently powerful himself. Bedru Khan Beg was exiled in consequence, and, with his family, ordered to live in Constantinople.

After this episode things went on as before, in theory, but in fact they became steadily worse. Bit by bit the Turkish government got more power in the land, and the Vali, or governor-general was gradually substituted for the Kurdish Agha. The governor brought with him his usual train of deputy-governors, local officials, tax-collectors and all the evil tribe of hangers-on that usually accompany Ottoman officialdom. In theory, of course, the establishment of regular government in place of Ashiret lawlessness—a process that went on in Turkish fashion, continuously but irregularly for the next sixty years—should have been for the good of everybody. Actually, the unchanging policy of authority was to favour the Mahommedan at the cost of the Christian. The Kurd was allowed to provide himself with arms, and when the "Hamidié" force was enrolled in the latter part of the nineteenth century, he was actually provided with them by the government.

The Ashiret Christian had been able, even at heavy odds in numbers, to defend himself in his own gorges and mountains, so long as the arms were reasonably equal. When to the handicap of numbers there was added that of armament, and it became a question of modern breech-loader against antiquated flint-lock, the position became hopeless.

The mountain districts then were gradually brought under a Turkish government which itself was steadily deteriorating in character. Only the riff-raff of Ottoman officials were ever sent to Kurdistan, and when utterly corrupt men are sent to

administer a remote province, and in addition are left unpaid, the result can easily be guessed.

The portion of the nation that was resident in Persia underwent a like treatment, with the exception that there the government, while being as bad as in Turkey, was a good deal feebler. In the year 1896, the remnant of the Church remaining there submitted to the Mission sent to educate them by the Russian orthodox Church, trusting that this ecclesiastical submission would ensure them political protection. This, to do the Russians bare justice, was actually the case, for so long as their power to protect anyone lasted. With this example before them, the section of the nation in Turkish territory, seeing their old Ashiret status vanishing week by week, began to be inclined to follow suit.

One gleam of hope came to them in the year 1907, when the "Young Turk" party put down Abdul Hamid, and proclaimed a policy of reform, and equal rights for all Ottoman subjects. When, however, the old officials were kept in office and continued in their old ways—save perhaps that, as bribery was now considered to be dangerous, the official felt it incumbent on him to ask for more money than had been his habit before—the Christians who had to live under them despaired, and murmured bitterly, "You can give an old dog a new collar, but you cannot teach him new tricks." Actually, things rather worsened than otherwise under the "new regime," for there was less chance than before of making private terms.

What was left of the Church in the Ashiret districts was meditating an appeal to Russia, and submission to them after the example of their kin in Persia, when the outbreak of the Great War brought a new factor in the situation into play.

CHAPTER IX

ASSYRIAN CUSTOMS

We have now traced the history of a strange nation, from very early days to what is practically our own time—up to, in fact, the eve of the Great War. That universal earthquake brought about a great change in the position and surroundings of the people, so that customs, both national and ecclesiastical, which had lasted unchanged for thousands of years, have now been exposed for the first time to solvent influences which it is improbable that they will be able to resist. Thus, what has lasted for so long must now inevitably pass away.

A strange survival in an isolated corner of the world, these last representatives of the ancient Assyrian stock have hitherto kept up the most primitive of Semitic customs to an extent that can hardly be paralleled elsewhere, even in Mesopotamian marsh districts. As an ancient and fossilized Church, they had also preserved ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies which have either perished altogether elsewhere, or else have survived only in almost unrecognizable form. This state of existence has vanished irretrievably before the shock of the War, and has passed, as utterly and completely, as did the clan system of the Scottish Highlands—which it so much resembled—as a consequence of

the measures that followed the rising of "the Forty-five." If the nation is to survive at all, it must be as no more than an element in the Kingdom of Iraq, where its Church life may be respected, but must alter in new conditions, and any political individuality that it had preserved through the ages must of necessity be dissolved in the life of a larger whole.

One may regret the passing of a picturesque and ancient survival, but there is no means of preserving it. All that is possible, for one who happens to have lived with those customs while they were still living things, is to put them on record, in the hope that the memory of them may not altogether pass away.

It is sometimes said that the Assyrian or Nestorian Christians have no connection with the Assyrians of antiquity, either by language or, so far as is known, by race. With all respect, the present writer ventures to differ altogether from that conclusion, and to assert his belief that the present Assyrian, Chaldean, or Nestorian, does represent the ancient Assyrian stock, the subjects of Sargon and Sennacherib, so far as that very marked type survives at all. It is not a matter that is capable of documentary or monumental proof, from the nature of things, but certain facts that can be quoted seem to speak at least as loudly as do the words of any historian.

Here are a people who, in the time of the beginning of the Christian era, are found living in the lands where, in the year 600 B.C. the Assyrian stock had been established since history began; nor is

MODERN ASSYRIAN

ANCIENT ASSYRIANS
(King Sargon and his Vizir.)

there any record of any considerable immigration into, or emigration from, that land, in the interval. Their own traditions affirm that they are of the old Assyrian blood, with a possible intermixture of certain Babylonian or Chaldean elements. The writer has known men who claimed to be able to trace their own descent lineally from King Nebuchadnezzar; one might not wish, perhaps, to be "put to purgation" as to the accuracy of the pedigree of this man (one David d'Kelaita, of Mar B'Ishu), but the fact that he and others made that claim is at least evidence of the belief of the people as to their own origin.

The physiognomy of the type gives testimony in the same direction. Many a mountaineer from the Assyrian districts of Tiari or Tkhoma looks, when viewed in profile, exactly as if he had stepped down from one of the slabs in the Assyrian galleries of the British Museum, and the writer has more than once been guided to the carvings of Sennacherib's day, which are still to be found on the rocks of their country, by a native guide who, to all appearance, had just descended from those rocks himself.

We append a portrait of an Assyrian priest of to-day—the worthy original of it died in the year 1910—which we put for comparison's sake side by side with the portrait of King Sargon of Assyria giving instructions to his Vizir, and leave them to speak for themselves.

Even in matters of costume, the customs of old time held good. Ten years ago the men of Tiari still wore habitually the thick felt cap of conical shape that can be seen on the heads of the Assyrian

warriors on carvings that date from days before they had adopted the later metal helmet.

The evidence of language is one that has to be received with some caution, for all Semitic languages seem to have much the same grammar more or less elaborated, and a vocabulary that has a great deal in common, as far as the roots of the words are concerned. They form their verbs and sentences in the same way, and, as we have seen, "Aramaic" or Syriac became a "lingua franca" in the lands concerned in very early days. Some of the mercenary troops in the army of Xerxes seem to have spoken it, and it was certainly a second language to another learned man of the day, "the excellent Scribe, Ezra," who wrote—like other Biblical authors—sometimes in Syriac, sometimes in Hebrew.

One does not wish then to build too much on what may be a common inheritance, but it is the fact that many, if not most, of the words in most common use, were identical in Assyrian and in Syriac. Such words as Bread, Water, Sun, Moon, Star; Brother, Father, Servant, Horse, Dog, Donkey, Camel, Eagle, Leopard, Lion, are all identical, and the list could be extended a good deal, even by one whose knowledge of ancient Assyrian is hardly even elementary. The names of the months, for instance, are the same in both tongues. The fact probably is that all Semitic languages had so much in common that a common "Syriac" dialect could easily be formed from the medley of all as the Semitic empires of the older world broke down, and the Syriac that was the vernacular of first-cen-

tury Palestine was the lawful child of Assyrian and Hebrew. Naturally, this tongue also formed into local dialects. The question of the relation of the "vernacular Syriac" of the modern Assyrian to the "classic Language" in which his theology and his services are written, is one that pundits quarrel over with the zeal that they never fail to exhibit in such a problem. Some say that the "vernacular" is a late and corrupt development; others that it, like the Yorkshire dialect in England, is really far more ancient and venerable than the literary form. Who shall decide, when all the doctors disagree? One thing is certain, that the Assyrians boast with justice that they alone of all Christian nations still keep as their spoken language what is acknowledged to be the language of Palestine in the first century, and that therefore they alone among Christian nations—if we except a few villages that may still exist in the Lebanon—use regularly the language of Christ.

While on this question, it may be worth while reminding the English reader of the few scraps of Syriac that are familiar to him in the Gospels, though he may not recognize the language for what it is, and probably mispronounces it most barbarously in the reading of it.

"*Talîtha, Qum*" (the final "i" of the English text, which marks that the verb is feminine, is not pronounced) is good Syriac enough, both ancient and modern, for the familiar "Maid, arise." "Girl, get up," would be a better rendering. So also is the "*Eloi, Eloi, lamâ sabachthani*" of the last cry

upon the cross, though it may be noted that the "oi" in the first word is not a diphthong, but that the two vowels are pronounced separately, as in the modern word "Alahi," "My God." It is true that in the third case where a Syriac word comes in the sacred text, a Greek-writing evangelist has muddled the phrase as thoroughly as other historians in the same language could often muddle Oriental names. It is hard to recognize "*Ith-p'takh*," "be opened," in the "*ephphatha*" that the evangelist made of it.

The script in which Syriac is written, both by ancient and modern users of the language, at least passes through an Assyrian channel, though it is not an invention of that people, or even of the Babylonians from whom the Assyrians borrowed the cuneiform character which they used in more formal documents.

The Syriac alphabet is practically the same as that Phœnician which is the immediate ancestor of all alphabets in modern use, at least in Western lands. Those practically-minded merchants wanted an easy script for their account books, and they framed a set of symbols for all the ordinary sounds of their own Semitic tongue in the ninth or tenth century before Christ. The new letters were easier both to write and to read than the hieroglyphic of Egypt, or the cuneiform of Babylonia, though both of those must have been well known to their inventors. The idea of the alphabet may well have come from Crete, where an ancient script of the sort was certainly in use in far earlier ages, though

the deciphering of it must wait the discovery of the longed-for bilingual inscription at Knossos.

In point of fact an alphabet had been invented in Egypt nearly thirty centuries before, and a very practical one too; still, what would tend to vulgarize the sacred mystery of writing was not to be made known to the common folk, and the invention was suppressed by men who held that education was too strong a drug to be used indiscriminately.

The Phœnicians had no scruples in the matter, and we need not question what was taught us in our youth, that it was the Phœnician Cadmus who first brought letters to classic Greece, as it was certainly his fellow-countrymen who gave them to their Israelitish allies. They were conceivably part of the dowry of the illustrious Queen, Jezebel, for it is only a little after her date that they begin to appear on the two oldest inscriptions known to us, in lands connected with Israel, viz., the "Moabite Stone" and the "Siloam Conduit." Soon they begin to appear, in a slightly altered form, in the kindred kingdom of Aram.

Before very long the "new script" seems to have extended to Assyria also. Even where the cuneiform syllabary was known—as a sacred script for the use only of really educated men—the convenience of the new letters brought them into use, and it is not unusual to find a formal document duly engrossed on a clay tablet in the proper and holy cuneiform "of our fathers," while an abstract is made, for convenience, in the newer Aramaic script that can be written and read more quickly. As the new letters

were a Phœnician invention, they proved readily adaptable to all other Semitic tongues, to Assyrian as well as Hebrew.

The modern Hebrew script is an elaboration of the original, certainly of later date, and standing to it much as "Black Letter" stands to ordinary Latin type—a ceremonial script, meant for religious use primarily, or at least coming to be so used. The relation of the modern Arabic to the older forms is a further problem into which we do not now enter.

The modern Assyrian stock then, living in the same country as the old bearers of that name, using a form of the same language and script as their predecessors did, having the same physiognomy and claiming actual descent in their own traditions, may be fairly said to represent that ancient stock. Of course, no one would dream of saying that they are of unmixed blood. The Assyrians must themselves have been a mixed lot, even before their empire fell, for they had brought so many "captivities" into their land, and sent out so many colonists to take the place of the captives in the provinces that they annexed. Later immigrations of Persian and Turanian stock must also be allowed for. Still, the original stock of a land has a way of going on unchanged in the villages for centuries after empire has departed from them, and this we believe to have happened with the Assyrians. It is true that, in this case, another factor has come into play in the situation. For the last fifteen hundred years or so of their history their religion has been the determinant of their nationality, and any man who adopted the

faith became automatically a member of the nation. This, however, is a force that, when once it is established, works for permanence of a type, not for change in it.

A subject "millet" under Mussulman rule—and the same holds or did hold with Zoroastrian government—"keeps itself to itself," and will go on for centuries with a habit of marrying only within the body—saving, of course, the case of girls who are captured and lost to it—and so of keeping a purity of blood not known in the West. The notion of a religious denomination keeping up a separate social as well as a separate religious life during centuries, is strange to us but it exists in what was the Ottoman Empire. It is a parallel, though not too close a one, to the caste system of other lands.

We have ground then for holding that the modern Assyrian or Chaldean stock of modern Mesopotamia does represent the Assyrian of an older world, and that when men of the stock, resident in Mosul, came over to Nineveh to look at the excavations carried out there by British savants, they were justified in the claim they made that the tablets found there were "ours; the work of our fathers."

It was only natural that this old Semitic stock, living where nothing had ever occurred to disturb their habits of life, should keep up the old Semitic customs. They still lived, or did live till the changes of the Great War brought about an alteration, the life of the Old Testament. "Bible Customs," or those that we call such, were, of

course, not peculiar to the Hebrew, but were the common heritage of all the stock to which he belonged, and a part of the atmosphere of the land. Thus it was that a man of long experience, when asked by a youngster what books he had best study as a preparation to going out to Iraq, replied, "Take the Bible first and foremost. For the politics of the country, study the Book of Judges. For the philosophy and religious thought, the Book of Job. For the social life and habits—well, add to the Bible the *Arabian Nights*—Burton's edition, the unexpurgated one!" Perhaps if the man was to go to Kurdistan, one would be tempted to add to the list the works of Sir Walter Scott, with a special recommendation of the "Border Minstrelsy." The whole atmosphere of Kurdistan, up to and beyond the year 1914, was practically that of the Highlands of Scotland before "the Forty-five."

Among the old customs, existing in Biblical times, but regularly and fruitlessly forbidden by the writers of Scripture, we may put the habit of using ancient magical arts. All over the land inhabited by the Assyrians nearly every village would produce an old man or old woman who was knowledgeable in the matter of spells. The impression made on the mind of the writer in the course of residence in the land, was that there were far more professors of this ancient science among the Christian tribes than among those of the faith of Islam. Of course it may be that we had closer relations with the one than with the other, and that

no Eastern—or Western either for that matter—will ever speak on such subjects till he knows his interlocutor well enough to be sure that the foreigner will not laugh at what is to him sacred and mysterious. Still, it did seem to be the fact that Moslems in need of knowledge of the future would often come to Christians to inquire of it, while Christians would seldom seek the good offices of a Mahommedan wizard. The practice was, of course, as contrary to their own canons, as it was also to Scripture. It takes, however, more than an authoritative prohibition to keep either Eastern or Western from that forbidden fruit.

There were many ways of foretelling the future, one common and reliable one being that of the "Numbers of the name." The letters of the applicant's name were taken, and their numerical value (every letter in the Syriac alphabet has a numerical value) was noted down and added up. Then the total was divided by some mystic number, nineteen being the one most commonly chosen. Why this should be nobody seemed to know, but the fact that the Babis at one time selected that particular number as their sacred one, would seem to show that it has some particular character of its own in the mind of the people of those lands. The number of the letters of the name being thus divided, you then took either the quotient or the remainder, and drew conclusions from it, according as it was odd or even. Naturally there were ways of ascertaining whether the course of true love would run smooth —an inquiry that has been put since youths and

maidens first existed. One fashionable way was the method of fasting. The young man would fast rigidly, abstaining from all food and drink for the period of three days and nights, and preferably at some sacred season of the year. The "Rogation of the Ninevites," of which we must speak later, was a favourite time for this particular augury, as the fast in question lasted three days. The fast done, the seeker after knowledge would allow himself to eat, but not to drink. He must eat three handfuls of parched barley, mixed with a like amount of salt, and then sleep—if he could. Under such circumstances he was pretty sure to dream of the water for which every cell in his body was craving, and it was to be hoped that the damsel who was his destiny would come in his visions and give him to drink. Naturally, anything might be an omen, and every little twitch or itch in the body was noted in the books as possessed of its mystic meaning.

Medicine was mostly magical, though the older women and men had often a considerable knowledge of simples brought down to them from their fathers. Still, these were often administered with the help of charms, and if the combination was effective, it was not well to ask which element had really done the work. "Have you, with all your learning, no charm for the headache?" was the question once put by a sufferer to the writer. "Even the wiser priests in our villages can do as much as that."

Belief in the "Evil Eye"—is there any part of

the world where that superstition has not prevailed at one time or another?—was, of course, practically universal, and we have been asked to cure a man, not of the results of it, cast by another, but of the tendency to cast it himself. The poor wretch was like a "typhoid-carrier," who brought evil infection unintentionally, wherever he went, and was naturally feared and hated by all his neighbours for the harm he inevitably brought by his presence. Did he look at a lamb, the wolf got it; his glance would make a crock of milk upset, or cause a child to tumble into the fire. That he should ask for deliverance by any means from such a fate was natural enough, but unfortunately none was available. Possibly exorcism would seem to be indicated, but even that is hardly appropriate.

Spells, written out by the learned on scraps of paper, could be applied in various ways. The ink might be washed off the paper in water and given to the patient to drink, or the paper might be burned in a lamp by his bedside, and the smoke used for fumigation. A method very similar to that was used by Tobit in the land of Babylon in the days of the Jewish captivity, to drive away the evil spirit that had afflicted his bride, and the custom, ancient then, has survived to the present day.

Nor is this the only custom of ancient Babylon that still survives. Many of the magic formulæ that the modern Assyrians use to cure their sick or to foretell the future are practically and sometimes almost verbally identical with the spells on the most

ancient tablets of Babylon and on those copied from them in Nineveh. The receipts in present use go back long before the days of Abraham, and have probably been in continuous use for a period of from six to seven thousand years.

Other practices that also date back to very ancient days are still kept up by the Assyrians, and though they did not survive among them only, they are at least performed by them far more openly than by others. One of these is the practice of animal sacrifice, which seems strange as a survival among Christian nations—though more familiar among those of the faith of Islam—but which nevertheless is more widely spread and more generally practised, even in accessible lands, than European travellers always realize.

As carried out by Assyrians, sacrifices were performed with as close an adherence to the ritual laid down in the Old Testament as circumstances would allow. The animal destined for the service—usually a kid, though at times an ox or even a buffalo—was brought to the church by its owner, the "offerer." The church was usually one that was "Lord of Name" or of special reputation for sanctity in the neighbourhood, but this was not invariably the case. The party bringing the animal was met at the door of the church by the priest, and after the recitation of certain prayers and invocations of the Trinity, and the placing of the hands of the "Offerer" on the head of the animal, it was sacrificed by the cutting of its throat. This, by the way, is the usual means of killing any beast

for meat in the country, and was by no means confined to Mahommedans, though they of course would do it for ritual reasons. It was the owner of the sacrificed beast who himself cut its throat, not the priest, but it was the office of the priest to catch the blood in a basin, and to "strike" (sprinkle or smear) it upon the lintel of the church door. The animal was then cut up, the priest taking his perquisite of hide and shoulder, and being usually one of the guests at the ceremonial or sacrificial banquet that followed upon the meat of the rest of the beast, a banquet that usually took place in the courtyard of the church. Places that were "Lord of Name," and where sacrifices were frequent, often had cooking arrangements permanently provided, and their courtyards were not usually used for interments.

Save that there was no altar on which the blood could be poured, the ceremony was in all respects parallel to a sacrifice of the Old Testament ritual, and the resemblance extended to other features. On occasions where the priest, through accident, was not available when a man arrived to offer a sacrifice, it was customary to lead the animal to the doorpost of the church door, and there pierce its ear with an awl, in token that the animal was Church property irrevocably for ever, vowed to the holy purpose. In Israelitish days it was the method of showing that a slave who had refused freedom was irrevocably the property of the house to which he had voluntarily declared himself to belong (Exod. xxi. 6; Deut. xv. 17).

The resemblance of the customs of the people to those of the Old Testament often led good people, whose knowledge of antiquity was perhaps confined to a thorough knowledge of that volume, to declare that the Assyrians must undoubtedly be the lost ten tribes who have been found in so many different parts of the world. This argument, though attractive, really proves a great deal too much. The same customs prevailed not only among the Israelites but among all nations of their Semitic blood from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean. What we call "Bible customs" are merely the Hebrew part of that common heritage.

The home of the Assyrians in Kurdistan was almost the only place where the sacrificial rite was practised openly, and as it were officially, by Christians, though every Mahommedan keeps the "Feast of Sacrifice," and it must not be forgotten that Armenians practised it also, and that their Church had, and probably still has, a formal service for use on the occasion. It was also carried on under the rose, all over Palestine, and in places at no great distance from Jerusalem. It may also be found existing in the Lebanon. Here it was, in effect, a survival of that cult of the "High Places" which was part of the religious inheritance of the land that Israel took over from their predecessors in it, which late kings like Hezekiah or Josiah might seek to destroy for sufficient reasons, but which nevertheless so stern a monotheist as the prophet Elijah felt himself able to endorse on one very solemn occasion.

As practised by the Assyrians in their own home the sacrifices have been described by travellers as an imitation or a survival of the rites of the Old Testament. In reality it is the other way about. It is the rites of the Old Testament that are derived from those of the Assyrians. These sacrifices were already old in the land when Abraham went forth from it (for his migration is quite a late episode in Mesopotamian history), and he inherited and practised them, in a form more primitive than was usual among his descendants (see Gen. xv.), but which has left plain traces still in the customs of those whom he left behind him. They are a part of the primitive Semitic inheritance which Moses found existing among the tribesmen whom he organized into a nation, and whose customs he reformed in a code that was elaborated by later hands. Naturally, then, a people who, still dwelling in the old land, have retained the primitive Semitic ways as it were fossilized, have kept this custom as part of their general cultural heritage.

This sacrificial custom, too, is not by any means the only primitive rite that has been preserved by a people who still live the Bible, without conscious imitation, but as a part of their ordinary national life. It is true that the habits are now altering with the change in their position, but they formed an inherent and obvious feature of their everyday life until the beginning of the twentieth century. A host would naturally, and as a courtesy to the chief guest, "dip the sop, and give it to him"; it was not always an easy thing to receive

that compliment as gracefully as it was intended. The question of precedence, and the "chief rooms at feasts" was as important as in Palestine in the first century,—or an Indian Durbar in the twentieth.

In an ordinary house the ways of life in the year 1900 were still those of the Scripture. The bath was taken, quite naturally, *al fresco*, so that for the King to "see a woman washing herself" as he walked at even on the roof of his palace, was a perfectly natural thing.

As a matter of course, every house had its own oven, where the daily bread was baked, the "three loaves" of the Gospel incident being the ordinary portion of a man. To have to use another's oven was shame and disgrace for any self-respecting housewife, so that the notion of "ten women having to bake their bread in one oven, and receive their bread again by weight" (Lev. xxvi. 26) conveyed at once the idea of homelessness in the land of the foreigner. The very make of the oven itself made many a passage of Scripture comprehensible. It was a deep pit sunk in the floor, with the fire at the bottom of it, so that the sides—on which the dough was stuck for baking in big flaps—would naturally be impregnated with soot, however highly polished they might be for cleanness sake. To be "as black as an oven" from famine is hardly a natural figure to us now, but it would seem that the one to which Jeremiah was accustomed (Lam. v. 10) was of like pattern. A similar big sunken pit, with the fire kindled at the bottom of it,

was the method by which brick was burnt for building—when it was burnt at all. Traces of such big pits can still be seen in the neighbourhood of Babylon, to explain how a Hebrew writer could picture men as "falling down bound into the burning fiery furnace," and the King "drawing near to the mouth" of it to look in.

It can be readily understood that, when a people of this primitive type of mind have accepted Christianity in its most primitive and early form, they will be apt to keep that form of religion in its primitive shape, and perhaps to fossilize it, as they are inclined to stereotype other habits in their life, particularly as their surroundings are such as to make the habit of "staying in the customs of our fathers" most natural to them. We have already seen (see p. 51) how the Church organization was the only form of national life open to a subject "millet" in an Oriental empire, and how the Church government accommodated itself, not too canonically, to their tribal life.

In the Church services the Eucharist is naturally the central feature, being known as the "Qurbana," a word of a singular wealth of import. Etymologically it is the same as the "Korban" of the Gospels (Mark vii. 10, R.V.), "the thing dedicated to God," but as used for the name of the Liturgy it unites the notions of approach to the Most High, of Offering made to Him, and of acceptance of such Offering by Him—a word of deep meaning indeed.

The Assyrian Liturgy, or rather the principal

one of the three actually used, is known as the "Taksa of SS. Adai and Mari," and is probably the oldest, or at least one of the two oldest, of the known and existing rites of Holy Communion. Its structure is that of an ordinary Oriental liturgy, consisting of the "Order of the Baking of the Bread" (always a separate service in the East), the "Missa Catechumenorum" and the Mass proper. The two latter have interest only for professed students of liturgical science, but the former contains a rite peculiar to the Assyrian Church, and of a picturesqueness—if no more—that may appeal to all lovers of the mystic. It is the "Succession of the Leaven."

At the baking of the eucharistic bread it is leavened, according to the general custom of the East—it was the insistence on that point that was one of the causes of the breach with Rome—but in this special case the leavening is done in one peculiar way. A certain amount of the bread, consecrated at a previous "Qurbana," is reserved, in order that a small portion of it may be put into the dough that is in process of preparing, and so leaven it. By this process, the bread of this Sunday's "Qurbana" is put into connection, as it were, with that used at the previous celebration, and, through it, with that used on all previous occasions, back to the institution in the Upper Room at Jerusalem.

The reserved leaven—it may be noted that it is only for this purpose that reservation is practised in this communion—is called "Melka," or "King," the name by which Spaniards are in the habit of

AN ASSYRIAN FROM THE HAKKIARI HIGHLANDS IN NATIVE DRESS

AN ASSYRIAN PRIEST

Note his peaked cap and home-made shoes (rishikis).

designating the consecrated Host, and the placing of it in the building is a part of the consecration of a new church. Their tradition, or legend, is that at the institution, the Lord gave a double portion of the Bread to the Beloved Disciple, St. John, who consumed the one but reserved the other for this purpose. Each apostle received a portion of it when they scattered to evangelize the world, but only St. Adai (Thaddaeus) was able to keep his.

Sermons are a rarity, but there is a regular place for them in the liturgy. Where given, they usually take the very reasonable form of a running commentary on the Gospel for the day, which is usually read out in the vernacular, from the classic Syriac of the "Pshitta"[1] version of the Scriptures, the "Authorized Version" of the East at large. The whole rite is naturally spoken of habitually as an oblation or sacrifice, but there is no over-definition, happily, either of the rationale of that sacrifice, or of the method of the Presence, the reality of which all would affirm. In like fashion, there is habitual prayer for the departed, with no attempt to define what their present state may be, and while there is no direct prayer to the Saints in any authorized form of service—we do not say that popular devotion stays always within those limits—there is regular prayer to the Most High, that those on earth may be aided by their intercessions. A specimen of these prayers (which we may also commend to any student of theology, as showing how far

[1] A translation of the Scriptures, in the "simple" language that the word means, and dating from the fourth century.

from just it is to accuse this Church of technical "Nestorianism") may be appended here.

"Arm us, our Lord and God, with invincible armour, by the prayers of thy blessed Mother, and grant that we may have part and lot with her in the heavenly bridal feast, O Lord of all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit eternally."

The daily services of the Church are of ordinary type, but the "Occasional rites" are at times of singularly picturesque character. The watch-service of Christmas Eve, with its kindling of the "Shepherds' Watch-fire," in the form of a splendid bonfire, either in the church or in its courtyard, would make a strong appeal to youth in the West, as would also the drama performed in each church on Easter Monday. Then the boy to whom it has been given to "act the Penitent Thief" for that year, storms the sanctuary *vi et armis*, and is driven back again and again by the blazing torches held by the deacons, who for the nonce represent the Cherubim that guarded Paradise with the flaming swords. At last the Penitent Thief secures the cross that lies always on a table at the entrance of the sanctuary—and which each worshipper kisses on entering the church—and comes forward brandishing that passport to bliss. Then the Deacon-angels receive him, and—seeing that souls are always borne by angels into Paradise, and also that no unordained man may set foot in the sanctuary, the boy is carried pick-a-back into the "Altar-enclosure." Certainly such rites might relieve the monotony of a long service in the West, as our fathers knew, when in

happier mediæval days they, too, were not afraid of drama in the churches.

We have already referred to the marvellous fasts which youth, inspired by love, will perform at the "Rogation of the Ninevites," and that observance deserves a word to itself. It commemorates, as its name implies, the repentance of the men of Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah, and is said to have gone on from that day to this. However that may be—and it was certainly reformed, if not instituted, by a zealous sixth-century Bishop—there seems to be evidence of great antiquity for the custom. The Devil-worshipping Yezidis, who are not usually credited with the habit of borrowing their observances from Christians, keep this fast year by year—and it is the only one that they do normally keep. Far otherwise is it with their Christian neighbours. They keep fasts with a strictness incredible to Westerns, observing a Lent of fifty days, when milk, cheese and fish are taboo, as well as meat. This fast extends over the Sundays —a habit that is uncanonical, but is probably insisted on by the women folk, who cannot be put to the trouble of cleaning, every Monday in Lent, the cooking pots that they scour so rigorously on that "Clean Monday" with which the fast opens.

That those who fast so stringently for the love of it as a rule, should also insist on a fasting reception of the Holy Communion, is only to be expected. Here, indeed, the service is often performed in the evening, with the idea that the Elements should be the first food taken after the conclusion of a fast,

and it is quite common—and not marvellous, in a land where every Moslem keeps his Ramazan—for men to go fasting at their work all day, as a preparation for the "Qurbana" in the evening. The writer has ere this suggested to English friends the institution of an "Evening Communion" to which all should come fasting, as a possible road to a concordat between "High" and "Low" in England, but the suggestion was not welcomed by either party.

Other possible applications of fasting—as a means of getting a wife, for instance—have been already mentioned, but that does not exhaust its uses. You can fast "against your enemy," as a means of bringing down upon him the divine judgment which such a scoundrel no doubt deserves, or, like Mahatmas in other lands, can fast "for the nation" as an atonement to high heaven for its misdeeds, but these are mere private additions to a Church rule that is severe enough already.

The Church fabrics where these rites are performed are as strange to a Western eye as are the rites to a Western mind. A small building, much on the lines of our own border "Peel Towers," with a hall below which is the church, and a defensible and loop-holed upper storey, which has to serve at times as the citadel of the village against the enemy, is an Assyrian mountain church. Though tiny in size (for forty feet by twenty is a large nave with them), they yet can accommodate more worshippers than one accustomed to pews and a seated congregation would expect. Eight hundred square

feet will take four hundred people, who usually stand upright, and telescope down on to their knees at the right moment. A mountain village that has four hundred inhabitants is a large one. At the east of this nave is a tiny sanctuary, called the Altar (what we understand by the word is a niche in the eastern wall of this part of the church), which is walled off by a solid wall, and entered only by a low door—a precaution against profanation.

A tiny sacristy at the side—with a separate entrance from the nave—serves for the "Office of the Baking of the Bread," and is furnished with a fireplace and oven accordingly. In front of the wall of the "Altar" is the platform of the "Bema," the standpoint of the priest in the services, other than the "Qurbana"; which carries the two little tables "of the Cross" and "of the Gospels," lying each of them in its proper place. The only windows are tiny loopholes, and heating apparatus there is none. Huge service books—manuscripts—lie on lecterns in the nave, and the congregation gather round them to read if they can read, being entirely indifferent, apparently, as to whether the book is upside-down or not. The Priest has his vestments—alb, stole and girdle, and a cope-like chasuble, square in shape, called the M'apra.

It is a place for the due performance of the Holy Mysteries. A Protestant regards a sermon as the main object of the service, and comes to hear it. A Western Catholic, whether he be Roman or Anglican, may come to "assist" at a holy ceremony, but he wishes to see and hear it. An Oriental is different

from both. He is there to be present at a holy Mystery and if he is reasonably sure that it is being performed aright, then he does not wish either to see or hear. Which is nearer the truth? It may take all sorts to make a world in religion as well as in other matters.

The churches serve also as places of cure. Epileptics and lunatics—both of whom are described as "possessed"—are brought to them and left in chains in the holy place for the night, very often with curative effects for those who believe in the treatment. Moslems and Christians show a certain "give and take" and respect for one another's shrines in this matter, for the Mahommedan will ask to be left in the church, or to have the lamp that burns by his bed filled with "church oil," and provided with a wick blessed by the priest, that he may be cured thereby. We have known Kurds who, by chance, had the custody of an Armenian church, come to ask for a gift of oil, that they might be able to keep up the light proper to a "ziaret," or place of local pilgrimage.

Strange mystic traditions, fit to set beside their belief in the "succession of the Leaven," naturally persisted among them, for a people's legends correspond to its character. "Our Fathers told" how Adam, on his expulsion from Paradise, took with him a twig of the Tree of Life, and some of the spices of the Tree of Knowledge. From the shoot grew a rod, that descended to the days of Abraham. That was the rod that Jacob took upon his journey, the staff on which he bowed to worship. It was

left on Mount Sinai, and was given by Jethro to Moses, so that this was the staff which was used at the Red Sea, and held up the serpent in the wilderness. Finally, being placed by David in the temple, it was this branch of the Tree of Life of old that became the Tree of Life indeed, for Pilate's men took it unknowing, as it lay among the stones of the city, and made it the cross-beam of the Tree on Calvary. For the spices, they were hidden in a secure place by Shem, and the secret of their presence handed down, till the Magi of the East knew that He had come who had the right to them. Then they took them from the coffer where Shem had placed them, to bear to the west and offer to the Babe at Bethlehem—the frankincense of the Gospels.

We have seen that the rulers of the nation-Church were a picturesque, if also a devoted set of men, combining the duties of Bishop and of chief. We have known a Bishop use his Pastoral staff for the purpose of giving a sound thrashing to a disorderly priest—he had caught him ploughing the glebe on Sunday. The staff that could bring the priest to order was as effective in beating disobedient lay-folk. When the oak crook that was the symbol of office broke in use, he asked the writer to give him a new one. Matrimonial cases—an important part of the canon law of the Church—came also before their lordships, and were sometimes solved by rule of thumb. In a dispute over a betrothal, where we had suggested that the maiden might be allowed her choice between two suitors, "Oh, that

would never do here. The first who asked for her gets her. They are both fine men; it can't make any difference to the girl."

Bishops, as already noted, were celibate, though priests were allowed to marry, and son would often succeed father in office, as naturally as in a "family living" elsewhere. What is technically known as "the religious life" was represented by celibates of both sexes, "rabbans" and "rabbantas." Once there were many monasteries in the land, of which a few still remain in the plain districts, now under Roman jurisdiction (the famous house of Rabban Hormizd in Mosul plain being one of them), and at one time several of the mountain churches were plainly monastic. But, as a rule, these followers of the religious life are celibates without convents, living an unmarried life in their own families, supposedly devoted to works of charity and worship. It is a curious and unintentional reversion to what the monastic life began with in the second and third centuries of the Christian era—the "Virgins" of the days of St. Cyprian, in the Church of Africa.

For the people themselves, they were Highlanders, with a clansman's virtues and failings. Intensely loyal to their chief in the abstract, but seldom willing to put away folly at his bidding. Courteous in their own way—a way that was sometimes startling to a stranger. "It is my hope," a mountain chief said to the writer once, "that you will come and stay at my house on this journey." Some excuse, as that of being pressed, being offered,

the chief went on,—"If you do, I shall be proud to receive you; if you do not, my honour will make it needful for me to shoot you, so I hope that you will come." No more delightful host to a guest could be desired when, under this pressure, the invitation was accepted.

Naturally, in a society where the "flash-point" was so easily reached, feuds had a way of starting unexpectedly. One such was started and lasted twenty years, because at some friendly gathering A had kicked B's dog. A row resulted, in which both parties took sides with their own man—or dog; blood was shed, and war followed that lasted for a generation.

Yet at times, gatherings even of avowed enemies, Christian and Kurd, could be friendly. One such took place in the courtyard of the writer's house, when perhaps the courtesy of both parties was enhanced by the fact that each knew that it had to be on guard against the other. Then, tribesmen who were at open feud met in a truce that lasted two days, talking in most friendly wise, and chaffing one another over past episodes in the quarrel, though it was naturally impossible that they should take food together.

Often a feud could be conducted in what we can only describe as a "school-boy spirit." We have known men of a Christian tribe go out and carry out a raid with brilliant success, securing five hundred sheep without even waking their legitimate owners. Then, when safe on the way home, it has occurred to some hot-head that there is scant satis-

faction in taking your enemy's sheep, unless you know that that enemy knows who has scored off him. Wherefore the sheep were left on the hillside, and the men went back to the Kurdish village, to fire shots and howl contumely, till the enemy should come out and have a satisfactory fight.

In old days, certain definite understandings governed the conduct of a gentleman on feud. Anyone could go on raid, and what he took was his lawful plunder, but stealing as distinct from robbing —a distinction to be understood by such a gentleman as Evan Dhu Maccombich—was shame past the bearing. We have known an Assyrian father, a man of Tiari, emulate the Roman father of old by sentencing his own son to death, when that hapless youth was found to have stolen goods instead of taking them in lawful war. There were rules for the conduct of a gentleman on raid. "Take what you like, but do not hurt what you leave, and above all, never hurt the women." This, perhaps, should be understood strictly, as "wives." Girls were at times annexed, but, after all, there was the general feeling that one husband was as good as another, and men even said that the maidens were not always quite unwilling victims.

As a general rule women went unmolested, and a real gentleman would even leave the corn-bin alone, when he took the sheep, while to trample down standing corn was a distinct breach of etiquette. It was a tremendous shock to the feelings of all, Kurd and Christian alike, when definite orders for the outraging of the women were under-

ASSYRIAN WOMEN AT BAQUBAH

stood to have been given by the highest authority, in the Armenian massacres of 1896. Naturally, what the Kurd had been once ordered to do by the Khalif of Islam, it was obvious that he could do afterwards when on feud on his own account; hence the episodes of that year marked a very great decline in the relations of the followers of all religions in Kurdistan. Feuds that had hitherto been almost friendly, and were certainly "sporting," became intensely bitter.

Of course, we do not claim that the honourable understanding which generally prevailed was honoured by both sides without exception. There was at least one case where the body of a Kurdish chief, killed in fight by Christian tribesmen, was burned by them in ignominy and despite. The fact gave a problem to Moslem theologians locally, for it raised the question whether even a "martyr" (for such, of course, this Mahommedan was, when he had been killed in war with the unbeliever) could claim the joys of Paradise, when he had no body left with which to enjoy them. What was more formidable was the precedent given. If Christians could burn a Moslem, even after he was dead, it was arguable that Moslems might also burn Christians, even when they were living; and there were occasions when they did so.

Often though, a Moslem gentleman could do justice, even against his own men. We remember a case of a certain priest, who complained to a Kurdish Agha of the theft of two donkeys by the Agha's men. The chief, not being able to return

the donkeys, at once handed over two buffaloes in compensation. It is true that when the Agha's son saw a "Frankish watch" on the priest's wrist, and asked for it, he had to have it. Before the priest left the Kurd's hold, he was called upon to mend his own watch, which had "gone to sleep" in consequence of its new owner having dropped it. However, it is probable that, even so, the Christian lost nothing on the deal.

In spite of kindly incidents such as this, the general state of things worsened steadily, and a situation which had been tolerable and very picturesque in 1890, was becoming intolerable by 1910. The Ottoman government was getting more and more power to control the mountain districts which it had hitherto left alone. Not only was their official class gradually deteriorating in character, but in order to calm the feelings of the Kurds under the unwelcome process, it was using all its power to depress the Christians. Impunity for any outrage was secured to their enemies, at the same time that all power of self-protection was being taken from them. Of course, there was no declared, perhaps no definitely designed, policy to act in this fashion, but both Turkish and Mahommedan instinct prompted such action, and nothing was done to check it. So the feeling grew among Christians—and to some extent among Kurds too—that they were getting more and more into the hands of the government, at the same time that they had ever less and less hope of decent treatment, or even elementary protection, from their officials.

With all of this, the wonderful and instinctive loyalty of the Oriental to the faith that is the life of his nationality remained unshaken. Conversions to Islam were almost as negligible in number as conversions from Islam to Christianity. There were, of course, a few cases of both kinds. A solitary Kurd living in a Christian village might elect to cast in his lot, religiously, with those among whom he dwelt; or a Kurdish damsel who had made a runaway match with a Christian tribesman might ask to be of her husband's faith. In such cases, propriety bade a Rabbanta, a nun, to perform the ceremony of baptism, for baptism other than by immersion is not a thinkable form of the sacrament.

There were heartrending cases of "apostasy" among Armenians during the massacres, when a father might accept Islam as the one means of saving his wife and daughters from worse than death. We have known a quarrelsome Assyrian —or should we say, one more quarrelsome than the ordinary run?—who "Islamized" in pure anger, because he felt that "they were all against him" in the village. In like fashion, we have known an English labourer give vent to similar feelings by setting fire to the stacks of a farmer who had no concern with the quarrel. In this case, however, the injured man found that there was a limit to what he could do, when his new co-religionists suggested that he should be the guide in a raid that they had planned on his own old home. He warned the intended victims of what threatened them, sought reconciliation to the Church—which was

granted to him—and then fled the country where the life of an apostate is *ipso facto* forfeit for his crime.

Everywhere, however, the feeling grew that things were growing worse and worse, and that there was no chance of improvement from the Ottoman. There was one gleam of hope in the year of the "Young Turk revolution," in 1907, when it was given out that now at last the government was to be reformed, and there were to be equal rights for every citizen in the land. Soon, however, bitter experience proved that, no matter what his intent might be, the Turk was incapable of altering his bent of mind so far as to treat Christian and Moslem on an equality. Other races too have come to the conclusion, that definite separation between the Turk and the non-Turk stocks is the only way of giving a fair chance to either, or of keeping either from the other's throat. So the feeling of sullen despair gathered strength in the minds of the mountaineers, and prevailing sentiment took the form: "Nothing can possibly be worse than going on for ever like this." That was what men were thinking, when the flame of the Great War set all ablaze.

CHAPTER X

THE GREAT WAR, AND AFTER

SUCH was the frame of mind of this little nation when Turkey entered into the Great War. If the Grand Vizir—Talaat Pasha—is to be believed, the Turkish government at that moment stated officially its intention of protecting its Christian subjects in every way. Talaat declared that he sent formal messages to the Armenian national authorities, saying that the Ottoman Empire had now entered on a struggle in which it was quite possible that it might go down. Should that happen, naturally the Christian Powers who were at war with it, would see to the safety of the Christian subjects of Turkey, and would never hold against them the fact that they had not risen against their own Sultan in the war. Let them therefore remain quiet, and they should be protected and have nothing to fear. If, however, they rose in revolt, they would have only themselves to thank for any horror that might befall them.

Whether this promise was actually made at the time, or was merely an expression of what the Ottoman authorities would like to have believed, is not certain. One thing is very certain, that if it was ever made, it was never kept. The fate of the

Armenians need not be recounted, for it is well known; Talaat declared that "the way to get rid of the Armenian Question is to get rid of the Armenians," and he availed himself to the full of the opportunity that the war gave him. In the case of the Assyrians, there is no evidence—as there is in the case of the Armenians—of a deliberate and systematic plan for the destruction of a whole nation.

What happened was, that all the usual checks which prevented the Kurds from executing their will on the helpless, or kept the minor officials of the province within the bounds of a relative decency, were withdrawn. It may be that the central authorities had too much to do to pay any attention to a distant district; it may be that they deliberately looked the other way; the effect was the same.

Attempts were made by the Turkish authorities to buy the loyalty of the nation. Promises of the most lavish variety, of education, of salaries, of the provision of weapons, were made to them even at the time that the Jehad had been proclaimed, and the Turkish Empire was preaching a "Holy War" against all Christians. Things, however, had come to such a pass that the most solemn promise of the Turk could not now be believed in, even if his inability or unwillingness to keep his word had not been proved by the arrival of a constant stream of hapless villagers, with dismal tales of what the Kurd was being allowed to do to their families.

A council of the leaders of the nation was held in the district of Diz, in the mountains of Hakkiari,

and the resolution solemnly taken to declare war on the Turk, and to throw in the lot of the nation with the Entente. One reason for their making this resolution was no doubt owing to the assurances made to the nation by Russian agents, who had promised supplies, weapons, and officers to train the national levies. The Assyrians were not numerous enough to be important allies in a struggle so colossal as was then raging, but the position of their mountains, on the flank of any possible Turkish resistance to the advance into Anatolia which the Russians then contemplated, was such as to make their friendship well worth having. There can, however, be no doubt that what nerved the people to the making of this desperate venture was the feeling that in no case was it possible for them to trust the Turk, and that if they must perish it was best to go down fighting in a worthy cause, while the promises of the Entente at least gave some prospect of deliverance and prosperity in the future. Whatever the workings of their minds, the step was resolved on. A solemn declaration of war against the Turk was sent to the nearest seat of Ottoman authority, and the nation took up such arms as it had and as the Russians could furnish, and stood prepared to fight to the last.

The story of the actual war has been told in some detail by the writer elsewhere,[1] and can only be summarized here. Three times, strong forces of Kurds, with a tolerable stiffening of regular Turkish troops, were sent against the mountain citadel of the

[1] *Our smallest Ally.* S.P.C.K.

nation, and three times they were repulsed by men who were no mean opponents, when fighting on the ground that they knew. A fourth attempt had better success, and the nation was driven from the valleys, and forced to take refuge on one of the great series of mountain plateaux, that form the summer pastures of the country. There they could defend themselves against any force which could be brought against them, but no human being can live on those tablelands during the Kurdistan winter, and the September of 1915 was already far advanced. The Turks thought that they had only to wait, and winter would do their work for them, and blockaded the area in consequence. The only hope seemed to lie in Russian help, help that had been promised so often, but had never been given, and one last appeal was made to them. The Patriarch Mar Shimun left his people on the mountains, made his way down, through the blockading lines, to Urmi, in Persia, there to appeal to the Russian commander of that city and to ask for the promised aid. The commander could only say that promise or no promise (for he did not deny the pledge), he was in no position to do anything, and urged the Patriarch to remain in the safety he had won, and not throw away his own life in the vain attempt to succour his people. Mar Shimun refused to stay even a night in the city, set out on his return, and passing once more through the force of the besiegers, rejoined his own folk.

One last effort was made for safety. Hurling their whole force unexpectedly on a part of the

ASSYRIAN NOTABLES

This group includes the Metropolitan of Shemsdinan, the Bishop of Jelu and Baz, Malek Ismail of Upper Tiari, Malek Shemsdin of Lower Tiari, and Malek Loka of Tkhoma, etc.

THE ASSYRIAN PATRIARCH MAR SHIMUN XXI

(Second from left) with his aunt Surma Khanim.

hostile line where no attack had been deemed possible, the migrating nation broke through, and by a march that only mountaineers could have accomplished, brought not only their fighting men, but even their non-combatants, to the comparative safety of Persia. It was a feat that the Russian officers at Urmi had thought quite impossible of accomplishment, and the Turks seem to have been as much amazed at it as were those professional soldiers.

In Persia the nation was safe for the moment, though their position was anomalous by any system of international law. Persia was a field of battle, over which all parties tramped at will, but was in theory neutral. The Russian authorities were the practical administrators of the land, and they received the Assyrians, recognized them as allies, armed them, and gave them a regular status in the war as they were carrying it on. Many non-combatants were also allowed to find a refuge in the Caucasus. Mar Shimun received a decoration of a high order from the Tsar, and there seemed to be a real prospect of deliverance for the nation, when the war should end in the victory of the Entente. Touch was established with the British, who were now in possession of Baghdad, and by their advice an alliance was made with the Armenians, and also with a Kurdish chief of the name of Simko, so as to protect that part of Persia from any Turkish attack, and to form part of the joint advance, then projected, by Russians and British in Mesopotamia.

The plan was quite feasible, but before it had

been put into action the keystone was knocked out of the arch by the collapse of Russia, and the whole edifice went down in ruin. Simko the Kurd, who had only joined in the scheme because it seemed to him that he would make his own profit out of it, instantly proceeded to make his own terms with the Turks and the Persians. To gratify them, if not at the direct suggestion of some of the officials of one of the two powers, he decoyed the Assyrian Patriarch to a friendly conference, and murdered him with every aggravation of treachery. The nation suddenly found themselves at once deprived of their chief and of their allies, and left helpless and isolated in the midst of their enemies. The people had still, however, its own fighting instinct, and the Russian alliance had at least gone so far that it left them provided with a very tolerable supply of munitions. Another leader came to the front, one Petros of Baz, a man of picturesque career but of real capacity for irregular warfare, and the nation was able to go on defending itself for the best part of a year. Attacks made by Persian, Turk and Kurd were beaten off one after the other, and it was only when the supply of ammunition—which they had no means of renewing—began to fail them, that the mountaineers felt any cause for anxiety. When their cartridges were nearly spent the prospect looked black indeed.

At this juncture, however, help came to them in a singularly dramatic manner. England had not forgotten those whom she had recognized as an ally, and though their position at Urmi in Persia

might have seemed quite out of the reach of those who had not then advanced far north of Baghdad, yet something was done to save them. A flying column, sent far out beyond the limit of any reasonable conception of military safety, got to a point within 150 miles of Urmi, and an officer of the flying corps, after a flight daring even in the records of the British Air Force, managed to reach the city, and tell the defenders that, if they could only contrive to get into touch with this relieving force, supplies might be sent up to them which would enable them to hold out.

The British intention was, of course, to support the nation in its own district, where they might have been able to establish a claim for political support after the war, but this plan also went awry. The main portion of the fighting force of the nation was used by its commander in an expedition to the South, there to get into touch with the British, and the Turks—who were now led by one of the few Ottoman generals who showed real military capacity during the war—saw their opportunity and attacked. The defences of Urmi were carried, and the whole people, instead of maintaining their position as an allied outpost in the North, suddenly poured southwards, resolved to throw themselves on British protection. It was a "trek" of from seventy to eighty thousand people, without any form of discipline or organization, over some five hundred miles of hostile country. Their enemies, tribal and military, were on their track, prepared to show no mercy either to man or woman.

What the losses were is not known, for the reason that only an approximate estimate of the number that started is available, but it is believed that half of those who started either perished on the way or fell into the hands of their enemies—and the lot of those who died was the lighter of the two. Many, however, came through in safety, and were received by the British authorities, and lodged in one great refugee camp at Baqubah near Baghdad, a modern "City of Refuge."

Between forty and fifty thousand souls were settled there, by an act of generosity to which we may fairly say only a British administration could have risen. They were still in a state of war with Turkey, and the problem of the commissariat was a far more urgent one than the beating of the Ottoman Empire. Now, this horde of refugees was thrown upon their hands—and every one of them was given the same food allowance as a British soldier. If anything, the administration erred on the side of kindness. Maintenance in idleness without the stimulus of discipline is good for neither Eastern nor Western, and the Assyrian is a type that shows the evil results of it sooner than some others. This state of things continued till the Armistice of 1918, when the nation thus resident in Iraq became part of the great problem of that country, and men soon began to ask what was to be done with it, with the Assyrians, and with Turkey?

The problem was one that men with local knowledge, who were willing to act in the spirit of proclamations already made by British authority,

could have settled at once. At the moment, any regulations and any government that the British Government chose to set up would have been received with gratitude in Iraq, and with at least resignation in Turkey, which was at that moment only praying for the regulation of good English officials. Unfortunately, the united wisdom of Europe had much to settle, and was persuaded, in its ignorance, of the truth of the only thing it does seem to have heard of matters Oriental, namely, that the East can always wait. Matters were further complicated by the unfortunate "Sykes-Picot Agreement," made between ourselves and France in the early days of the war. Much water had run down the Tigris since that understanding had been made, and the wiser heads of the French Cabinet had already come to the conclusion that they could not possibly carry out a plan which put the northern half of Iraq under their administration. But that did not mean that they were prepared, then, to facilitate a speedy settlement in Iraq by resigning what they could not use.

Hence, things dragged interminably. Turkey was handed over to the rule of the one power which she had always said she would resist to the last, namely Greece. She was stimulated thereby to struggle to her feet, and by defeating that one power, bring herself back to real life, and to most exaggerated claims.

In Iraq, things were allowed to drift till those who had only asked to be governed by us revolted in sheer boredom at the presence of folk who could

not make up their own minds as to what they wanted to do. The revolt was put down without much difficulty, but the upheaval had stirred the conscience of the British taxpayer, who became only anxious to get "Mespot" settled somehow, and off his over-burdened shoulders. The remedy (withdrawal), which he was much inclined to adopt, may have been the wrong one, but resentment at the system which had spent, in doing nothing tangible but getting itself disliked, sums which would have sufficed to make the whole country prosperous if properly applied, was at least a very human passion.

Meantime, the Assyrians remained at Baqubah. Nothing is more demoralizing for a mass of men than the refugee status, and the unhappy nation was in the mental state that inclined them to feel that demoralization to the full. Their national organization had pretty well melted away. When the Patriarch of the nation, who had led them in the early stages of the war, was murdered by Simko, there was no man in the Patriarchal House who had the power to take up the duties of leadership. The best head was a woman, Surma Khanim, sister of the murdered man, but a woman's leadership in war is impossible for Easterns, and the military headship fell, as we have seen, into the hands of Petros of Baz. Petros was a capable soldier, but no administrator, and his personal ambitions soon caused him to fall foul of British officialdom, and made him, it is to be feared, a tool for not over-scrupulous French intrigue. A brother of the Patriarch had been put up as lawful heir to his post of "Prince-

Bishop" of the nation, but he was soon seen to be a dying man, the result of tuberculosis, aggravated by the hardships of the retreat. In the meantime, he was quite incapable of performing an Oriental ruler's duties. In the East, a prince cannot merely reign: he must govern.

Thus, with an invalid holder of the titular rule on one side, and an active intriguer on the other, a less quarrelsome nation than the Assyrian might have found itself a prey to faction. The people was soon divided into two parties, one portion following Petros, with his claim to be regarded as "General and Prince of the Assyrians," while the other (the minority for the time) followed the Patriarchal House.

All were unanimous as to what they wanted, "our own country, under the protection of the British," but unfortunately the two parts of this demand were incompatible. Their own districts might have been guaranteed to them if they were content to be under whatever government fate might decree to those districts, but to ask a nation who had endured so much to go back to the rule of Turk or Persian was impossible. Further, even if their own districts were to be given to them, what was left of the nation was far too small a body to occupy, effectively, provinces in which they had been only a minority before the war, and while every man wanted "our own country," every man was also visualizing his own village as contained in whatever province might be granted.

Meantime, the ambitions of Petros were a factor

of disturbance. A levy of armed men, under British officers and discipline, had been raised from among the Assyrians when they first came down into the land, and this had been kept up as part of the forces with which the British were still controlling Iraq. Petros had claimed that, as his natural right, he should command this, with British officers under him. On the rejection of that claim he had retired in dudgeon, and had formed plans for the future with the French authorities—who under the unabrogated Picot Convention were to control Northern Iraq. Their vague encouragement fired his imagination, and he saw himself as the prince of an Assyrian principality, protected and financed by France and Great Britain jointly, which should include Diarbekr, Mosul, and Urmi.

There was thus a period of confusion, during which the British did not know what the future of Iraq, or the extent of it, was going to be. The Arabs, who knew that the country was anyhow to be theirs, did not know what to do with the Assyrians, and only wanted to be rid of them. The Assyrians were hopelessly divided among themselves, and could agree on nothing feasible.

On this ensued the rebellion of the Arabs, and a people that had hitherto appeared to authority as a mere nuisance, developed at once into a really valuable asset. Assyrians are an awkward handful in peace, even for their own rulers, for they can neither control themselves nor obey others. It is an admitted fact, however, that they can fight. As it is so general a belief among Englishmen that any

A PRIVATE OF
THE LEVY INFANTRY
An Assyrian from Tkhoma.

A TROOPER OF
THE LEVY CAVALRY
A Turkoman from Erbil.

ASSYRIAN OFFICERS OF THE IRAQ LEVIES

Oriental Christian is sure to be a hopeless coward, it is well to find one set at whom that is perhaps the only reproach which cannot be levelled.

The "Assyrian Levy" had already done good work in the previous year (1919) against their old Kurdish opponents. Some had said that to be given a good rifle and a good officer, and then to be sent against his tribal enemy, was as near to heaven as these turbulent Christians were ever likely to get, —or to enjoy if they got it. They were reported as "slow on the march, but marvellously enduring," and "on their own hill-ground as good as any soldiers in the world." Gurkhas who were brigaded with them admitted the Assyrian to be as good a man as they were themselves, and it may be that the Gurkha—a hill-man himself—saw nothing to object to in what sometimes startled more civilized men. "They are a blood-feud in khaki, when all is said," was the verdict of one good judge, and their conduct justified it at times. Their officers chaffed the men of one company for the roll of dead enemies that they claimed after a skirmish. "Don't tell me you got as many as that," they had said, and the Assyrian had said nothing. After the next action, however, they invited the sceptical officer to count a long row of human ears, with the grim comment, "There, Sahib, you can't say we didn't hit those chaps, anyhow." Some even deserted, finding an orderly campaign too slow for their taste, and sent a marvellous letter of apology to their Major, in a mixture of good Syriac and orderly-room English, inscribed on a filthy scrap of paper.

"To the beloved and right reverend our Major, peace and love be multiplied in the name of the Lord. Be it known to your greatness, that the reason of our running away was not that we did not wish to kill the Kurds, but that we so wished to do it, and that by the blessing of God, we have now been doing it for six days." Then with a lapse into English, "Regret to report following casualty. Soldier, private Jacob, one." "But, honoured Major, we have killed a whole lot of Kurds. Now, if you will promise to punish us, we will come in. But we fear going to the gaol in Mosul."

An officer accustomed to dealing with rough material sent out word that if they came in he would punish them all right, and when they had expiated their sins at pack-drill, the incident was closed. The formal report on the regiment said, that there had been a gratifying absence of crime while the battalion was on active service.

A regiment with such a love of fighting for its own sake did good service in the revolt, under officers who knew how to control its rather primitive instincts. In due course the rising flickered out, and the pledge given when General Maude entered Baghdad was then fulfilled. A native administration, under the Amir Feisul of the Sherifian House, was then set up to rule, the British retiring from all administrative posts as soon as Arabs could be found to fill them, and contenting themselves with the duties of "departmental advisers." This step was what the Arabs had asked for, but whether it was entirely to their wish that

their petition should be granted was another question. Some were heard to say, "Of course we asked for absolute independence, but surely you never thought that we meant that the British were to leave off administering the country."

The administration of King Feisul being once started, a determined effort was made to solve the problem of the presence of the Assyrians, with their claim for some sort of independence, in the country, and to relieve the government of the difficulty that their existence presented. Petros had been declaring that he was their chosen leader, and that if he was once given the chance he could carve out a territory for the people. If in so doing he was able to make a principality for himself, no one would grudge him the position he had won. Certain British officers at any rate had come to believe in him, and he was undoubtedly a good fighting man. Some thought that at least he was entitled to have his chance, all in authority were anxious to be rid of a problem and a burden. There was a good stretch of "no-man's land," lying unoccupied, between the frontiers of Turkey, Persia, and Iraq, which frontiers were themselves none too well defined. Let him then lead the nation up, and establish them there. If it was in them to make good, there was a semi-independent power established, where the infant State of Iraq would be glad to have a friend, and there was also a vexatious problem removed from its path.

With this prospect before him, Petros was soon able to enrol some four thousand men from the

nation, who were willing to follow him to a rather undefined promised land. The "Assyrian Levy" was disbanded, and its men allowed to join the expedition; a sufficiency of arms and money was provided by British authority, and three British officers attached to Petros' staff, in an advisory capacity. The force started on its way—rather perilously late in the year, for time had been wasted as it is apt to be on these occasions—the women being left to follow as soon as that should be practicable.

It was an unfortunately reckless venture, for a force was thus sent with no real controlling power into a country that was by no means too well known. Nobody was very certain what they meant to do, and it is to be feared that in enrolling his army, Petros had been lavish in promises, and had engaged that everybody would have what they wanted, more particularly the possession of what had been their own villages, no matter whether they happened to be within the district he hoped to conquer or not. In effect, the Government was saying, "You do not know what you want, and we do not know what to do with you. Go yourselves, and see whether you cannot do something." As a result, Petros made the discovery that an Oriental critic of the administration of others is rather apt to make, when he is himself set in authority, the discovery that it is one thing to say what ought to be done, and "what I would do if I were in charge," it is quite another to do it, and make others do it.

The personnel of the force was of two ways of

thinking. Composed in part of men of Urmi, part of mountaineers from Hakkiari, each was willing to win an Assyrian principality to which their own land belonged, but was not politically educated enough to see that it was well to act together in winning a district that belonged to the other, or to neither. The "army" crossed the border, but whatever plan Petros may have had in his head, he soon found that his followers had their own ideas on the object of the expedition. The men of the mountains went off to the north and west, towards the districts that had been their own,—and also towards the villages of their old enemies. The plainsmen went off to the east, hoping to reach their own home in Urmi, and Petros and his immediate staff, with his British advisers, were left alone.

The plainsmen at least did little harm. They broke down utterly in the mountains, under the stress of the first storms of the winter, that broke upon them as soon as they were on the road. That division fell utterly to pieces, dissolved into a mob of individuals, and made its way back to the camp in Mosul plain from which it had started.

The mountain men were of tougher material. They were very soon harrying the villages of certain old enemies of theirs near their former homes, and raiding them quite in the style of the good old days, blissfully ignoring the fact that these Kurdish tribes, if enemies of theirs, were most loyal dependents of the British authorities, and inside the district where those British authorities were responsible for law and order.

Very wrathful Political Officers, with a handful of police, were presently on the scene, much like good school prefects, when a dormitory is indulging in a joyful "rag." The Assyrians had no intention whatever of attacking the British, though they had been quite unable to grasp the thought that their friends might object to their carrying out an old feud to its lawful end, and under their orders they too returned to the plain like schoolboys who realize that a "lark" may have unpleasant consequence, but yet have a lurking conviction that it was worth it.

So, a fortnight from the time of starting saw all back in the Refugee Camp once more, with the problem still unsettled, and only sadly complicated by the scheme on which such hopes had been built.

Government had so much else to do that it was inclined to let the weary Assyrian problem alone for the time being, and presently the idea took shape that as these Assyrians were there, and could not be got rid of, they might at any rate be used. The State of Iraq had been constituted, and there was hope that in time it would have its own army, though that was still a thing of the future. At the moment the British Government was anxious to withdraw all Imperial troops from Iraq, saving only the Air Force; but it was recognized that that arm, though wonderful within its own limitations, stands in absolute need of some "Ground Force" both to protect its central establishments, and to strike at the point where the blow is to fall. Aeroplanes can get information, and can drop bombs;

there is, however, so much room in the desert, and so many rocks in Kurdistan, that experience has proved this mode of action to be ineffective in both places. It was felt that, even if the Assyrian seemed able to do little but fight, yet he could at least do that, and it was a pity not to use the one power he did seem to possess for the benefit of the State in which he happened to be.

Orders were accordingly given to reconstitute that "Assyrian Levy" which had been disbanded not long before. Petros, naturally annoyed at his own failure, did his best to prevent this, talking wildly about the French intervention which he said he had been assured was now impending. At the moment, however, the French were quite sure that they did not want to commit themselves further in Asia than could be avoided, and when they evacuated the Cilician province which they had held since the end of the war, they frankly dropped the "Sykes-Picot Agreement," and left Britain to do what she liked in Mesopotamia.

In spite of recent occurrences, there was enough loyalty to the British and innate love of the war-game left in the people to make the raising of two battalions no very difficult work, particularly as Petros was now told to remove himself from the country. The bulk of the nation was settled in districts where it was possible for them to live and where they were yet under the rule of the Government of Iraq, not that of Turkey. It must be noted that, no matter what the Assyrians had hoped for, settlement under "a benevolent government, and if it

might be in their own land," was all that the British authorities in Iraq had ever felt able to promise them.

Many, prepared to take some risk if only they could go to their old home, went up to the mountain districts in the hope that Turkish authority would never be extended over them, and the majority of the refugees from Urmi drifted back to their own home in that district of Persia.

Soon the Levy found employment in the congenial work of fighting, for the Turks were causing trouble to the infant State of Iraq. They encouraged the Kurds to rise against the Government, availing themselves of the fact that the frontier was still undefined. Shortly after, declaring that the Ottoman Government regarded itself as not having abandoned its claim to quite a large portion of "Iraq"—if, indeed, not the whole of that "revolted province"—they seized on the important local centre of Rowanduz and asserted that they were prepared to fight in the defence of it to the very last man. Efforts were made to drive them out by continuous bombing, but the result only showed the limitations of the aeroplane as a weapon of war, formidable as it may be in its proper sphere. Every arm has its limits, and the best of cavalry under a Murat may find itself unable to capture a fortress by a charge. This lesson had now to be learned by the Royal Air Force. The newly raised army of the Iraq State, the "Jaish," to give the body its Arab name, was sent to receive its baptism of fire in this little campaign, for it was recognized that a

ground force was needed. Several companies of the Assyrian Levy, rather against the wish of the British commanding officer, were added to the force.

The result showed that each type of soldier has his own capacities and his own limitations. It was no reflection on the skill or courage of the airmen that they had failed to bomb the Turk out of Rowanduz, and no disgrace to the plains-bred Arabs that they were not at home in Kurdish hills and a Kurdish winter. The Arab is a good natural fighting man in his own tribal way, and can be made into a good soldier with proper training. The British subaltern and the Sergeant Instructor between them have made good troops ere now of far worse stuff than that which makes the Arab "Jaish." Still, to take Arabs, plainsmen from what is practically a tropical climate, and to put them on campaign in the terrible Kurdistan winter, is to ask the impossible from them. On more than one occasion they got into serious difficulty, losing their British officers, and having to be assisted out of their trouble by men of the Assyrian Levy who were perfectly at home in their own hills, being to the manner born.

The General in command soon took in the situation, and one of his first acts on return to headquarters was to increase the numbers of the Assyrian force. The fact, as British officers soon came to understand, is that each nationality has its own field. Arabs, like some Indian troops whose courage has been often tried, collapse in cold, much as the

Assyrian is apt to collapse in the heat of the desert. The plainsman cannot work, without long training, in the hills, even as the hillman cannot do his work in the plain. Both elements are needed for such work as the little army of the Iraq State may have to do, in the two different theatres where it is possible that order may have to be kept by the young State.

The Turk retired from Rowanduz—in spite of his vow—with no actual fighting on the spot, leaving that work to the Kurds whom he had called into the field. The call to service, however, did show the soldierly qualities of the Assyrian, under the bad campaigning conditions of a stormy March in Kurdistan—than which few conditions are more trying. "The colder and wetter it is, the more cheerful the Assyrians are," was the report of their commanding officer, who was also much impressed by the soldierly quality of a battalion that accomplished a march of forty-five miles in twenty-four hours on the mountain tracks of the Rowanduz district, on "haversack rations," without one man falling out. Another point in their character that much impressed British officers with Indian experience, was their capacity for making good officers. It is common knowledge that it is there that the Indian races are apt to fail, and that an Indian Subadar, brave as his own sword, and with the experience of a dozen campaigns, will lean in emergency on the newly-joined British subaltern, who has never smelt powder before. Assyrians, accustomed to the leading of their own men in Kurdish raids, seem to have capacity for leadership.

A double company of these troops was entrusted with escort duty in the camp of the High Commissioner, in districts where an attack was more than possible. The Assyrian officer posted the pickets round the camp, and his plan was inspected by the British colonel in command. "Why have you not put men there?" said the Englishman, pointing out a rather obvious unguarded point. The Assyrian grinned. "Me knowing Kurdi tricks," he said, "me wanting him come there," and the arrangement was left undisturbed.

Fresh work was soon given to the Levy. The question of the northern frontier of Iraq had soon to be decided, and the Ottoman Government was well aware of the importance of presenting the League of Nations—by whom the affair had to be judged—with a *fait accompli*. They advanced all along the line, giving an example of the treatment they proposed to mete out to those who were under their rule by a general massacre of all unfortunate Christians whom they could get at. The Assyrians who had returned to their old homes in Tiari were again expelled, though the fact that they had captured a Turkish governor who had come unexpectedly into their district gave the Ottoman Government some shadow of excuse for action against them. Coming south, they proceeded to occupy districts in the neighbourhood of Amadia, which had for years past been in the undisturbed occupation of the Government of Iraq and the British officers.

To turn them out of this became an obvious duty,

and a force composed of a battalion of the Assyrian Levy was sent up for the purpose.

On coming into touch with the enemy, the British officer in command came to the conclusion that the force which he had at hand was hardly sufficient to deal with the Turks, who were in considerably greater strength than had been anticipated. In his difficulty he turned to the local Bishop of the Assyrian Church, a prelate of the name of Yahb Alaha (Theodore), who had received his hereditary office, according to the custom of his Church, at what most people would consider an absurdly and uncanonically youthful age. "You see the position, my lord," said the English colonel; "do you think that you could raise a few irregulars, to help the British authorities in this emergency?"

"Can I raise irregulars to help the British?" said the Bishop; "of course I can." In three days he appeared at the British Headquarters with some five hundred sturdy mountaineers, whose appearance was, admittedly, more picturesque than military, but who all possessed good rifles which they knew how to use, and—as many of them had already served in the Assyrian Levy—at least some rudiments of discipline. His Lordship the Bishop had only one request to make of the Colonel, namely, that he might be allowed to take his irregulars into action himself. Leave being readily given, the Bishop took the field with the rest of the force, and on the day of battle handed his black episcopal coat to a deacon for safe keeping—for it was valuable—and led his troops into the fray, in purple

trousers and white shirt-sleeves. They stormed the Turkish position in excellent style, the English commanding officer looking on the while from the hill where he had taken his stand, and wondering whether the Archbishop of Canterbury would have done that particular job as well as his Nestorian brother.

Only one disappointment was in store for the Bishop and for the rest of the Assyrians; they failed, by a very little, to capture the Turkish Governor-General, who was the commander on the other side. Perhaps the British commander was less grieved than they, for the prisoner might have been a mere nuisance to keep. They did secure as trophies, however, the Turk's private store of brandy and whisky (for it seems that his Excellency liked to take the field in comfort), and with them certain papers which the Assyrians could not read, but which they duly handed to the British colonel. They proved to be the nominal rolls of the Turkish regiments engaged, and they were subsequently handed back to Ottoman authority, as an answer to a courteous explanation offered, that the recent regrettable frontier incident had been the work purely of irresponsible frontier tribes, over whom the Turkish Government was not in a position to exercise as much control as it might have liked.

Naturally, the Assyrians were only anxious to go on, and occupy their own old home of the Tiari district, from which they had been driven, and which then lay open for occupation. This was forbidden, on the ground that the whole question of the frontier

line was to be decided by the League of Nations, and that that august body might be trusted to do justice to those who had put their matters in its hands.

In due course the League of Nations gave its decision. The Assyrians had asked that they might have the right to reside as formerly in their old homes, which had been theirs before the Turk came out of Mongolia, living there under such government as they should elect for themselves, according to the principles laid down by the League itself.

The League decided that they were rebels against the Sultan, their own natural lord. Therefore they had no title whatever to consideration, but must go back as the natural subjects of the Turk—who had just deposed that Sultan—and submit to the mercy of those who were in the very act and article of massacring all of their kin on whom they could lay their hands. It was a flagrant and disgraceful denial of the very principles for which the League exists, and one of a series of cases in which the League which professedly exists for righteousness among the nations has given decisions based on expediency rather than justice, and has abandoned the weak who have trusted to it, lest the strong should repudiate its jurisdiction.

At the time of writing, the Assyrian nation, or what little is left of it, remains still in Iraq, in process of being settled, by the joint action of the Iraq authorities and their British advisers, in such villages as may be unoccupied within the frontier of Iraq.

A whole province of unoccupied villages is of

course a thing which it is not possible to find, nor is it to be expected that the Government of the Arab State should expropriate a large number of villages inhabited by their own subjects, in order to provide a place of residence for a set of Christian tribesmen whom—to do the State justice—they did not invite into their lands, and whom they do not particularly desire to have there. The result is that the people who have existed for so many centuries and have endured such trials are now scattered over a large area. The settlement of the Assyrians in Iraq, undertaken by British officers, has been what one can only describe as a "botched job," the best that the good men on the spot could do, under the conditions imposed upon them by their superiors at home; very far from being an ideal settlement in itself, or what those who sacrificed all for the cause of a victorious Entente might fairly have expected from nations which called them allies.

By the irony of fate, the most promising settlement of the Assyrians in the new homes that they have had to find when driven from those that they had occupied for three thousand years, is the one that has been assigned to them by the Soviet Government of Russia.

It will be remembered that several thousand of the nation, in the early stages of the war, when the Assyrians were under Russian protection in Urmi, sought refuge within Russian territory in Trans-Caucasia. There being quite harmless politically, they have been allowed to settle down in groups of contiguous villages, and to continue some sort of

corporate life as a "millet" of Russian subjects. What the future may hold for them there is of course unknown.

For those in Iraq, the only future that seems open to them is that they should remain as an element in that country, still retaining their cultural and ecclesiastical identity, but otherwise, ordinary subjects of the Kingdom of King Feisul. They were given a chance of practical independence once and having failed, it is too much to hope for a second. If there is tolerance and wisdom on both sides—alas! to expect it seems like hoping for a miracle—such a future may be theirs, and if they will accept the position, they have it in their power to be a useful political asset to the Government of Iraq. They are not numerous enough to be a political danger, though it is certain, unfortunately, that they can be a political nuisance.

Still, their capacity as soldiers is undoubtedly an asset of considerable value. For some time to come, Iraq will need some small mobile force at her command, to check the disturbances that are sure to arise in Kurdistan, partly from the nature of the Kurd—who does not love the Arab—partly from the fact that there is over the border a neighbour who may always see his possible profit in confusion in those provinces. If the Assyrians would take service under the Iraq Government, and if the Iraq Government would take example from our Indian experience, and let separate races provide each their own regiments in the common army, then they have in the Assyrians an instrument capable of doing

work which is easy enough for them but difficult for the Arab.

Perhaps to ask this from a Mahommedan government is to ask a good deal. Officials in the government may know well enough what it is wisest to do, but it is sometimes difficult for them to do it, when they have to consider the prejudices of the ignorant, liable as the ignorant always are in those lands to gusts of fanaticism. It is difficult for the Moslem to allow that the Christian has the same right as himself to carry arms in the defence of a country that is his as well as the Moslem's. Yet, in that recognition of the right of all faiths to equal duties in the country lies the safety not only of Moslem lands but of all countries.

If the Assyrians are accepted as an element among the subjects of the King of Iraq, then they may perhaps have a future, and begin a new chapter of their long history in the land where that history began. Failing that, the old independent Church must merge itself in the "Uniate" branch of it that exists in Mosul, and the long story of a nation that begins in the days of Abraham comes to an end.

But one hopes for better things than that. Surely it may be that a nation that could nerve itself for the great sacrifice in a common cause, when it joined the ranks of the Entente in 1915, and whose sons have shown themselves soldiers worthy to stand by the best in the British Empire, may have its little contribution to make to the future of the lands of whose history it was a part for a thousand years before European civilization began.

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